

THE
L I F E
OF THE
MARCHIONESS
DE
POMPADOUR.

THE FOURTH EDITION:

Revised and Enlarged by the

AUTHOR OF THE FIRST VOLUME,

WITH A

Continuation from 1757 to her Death.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

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T H E
L I F E
O F
MADAM DE POMPADOUR.

AMong the wretched contemptible expedients of despotism, for the maintenance of that unnatural government, the employment of spies upon its subjects has ever been, especially in France, since the loss of freedom, a point of state. But lately, that execrable practice has risen to an intolerable height, to the total destruction of pub-

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lic liberty and private happiness. To this rise, under the reign of the marchioness, there existed a double motive.

It has already been often observed that her power of amusing the king was one of her capital holds on his favor; by plying him perpetually with matter of gaiety and entertainment, and by constantly creating for him diversions from his naturally melancholic turn, that she was so long, in some measure, necessary to his existence, or at least to his existence with pleasure: and thus it was, that, by being the directress-general of his amusements, she came at length to be his prime-minister in the most serious affairs of the kingdom; as if the light spirit of bagatelle included a solid sense for bu-

finess. In none, however, of her various contrivances for chasing away that monster spleen from the royal bosom, did she more excel than in picking up all the little occurrences and stories of the day; which, from her manner of telling them, received a singular grace and embellishment. And as this was, in such a town especially as Paris, to say nothing of the other parts of the kingdom, a reservoir constantly filling, there was no fear of its being ever exhausted. For the supply then of this precious fund of amusement, she had, at her special devotion, the lieutenant-general de la police de Paris for the time being. This officer is the lowest in the class of ministers of state, but must necessarily, in virtue of his office, have the greatest influence in the civil ad-

ministration of that town. He used then, at least once a week, to wait on the marchioness, and open his budget to her, of all the scandalous anecdotes of town and country, with which it officially fell in his way to become acquainted. These materials of information she took care to garble, suppressing those which did not suit her purpose, or disappointing their effect, by previously giving her own turn to them; the others that might serve to divert the king she laid before him, enlivened with all the colors of wit and pleasantry she could give to them. It has been said with some reason, that no part of her management conduced more to captivate the king, and rivet his attachment, than this art of amusing him; and she also made, on these

occasions, a handle of this talent, to do essentially prejudice those who were disagreeable or obnoxious to her. Being, by these odious means of information, mistress of abundance of family-secrets, and points of private life and conversation, she was at once formidable for the use she could make of them to the public, and for that which she actually did make of them to the king. Unhappily for many, the ill she said of them, left indelible traces in the royal memory; while the good, which she occasionally mentioned of others, rather slipped unimpressive over it, like water over wax cloth. But the ill offices she did to those she meant to hurt were generally introduced by some high-flown sentiments of honor, and of morality, which were, to a prince,

really well-intentioned, but too efficacious a vehicle of the poison. Thus, often many useful and valuable subjects were, without their knowing it, and without the opportunity of clearing themselves, placed in so unfavorable a light, that they lost their fortune, and the state their service. Sometimes the charges against them were founded on fact, but the fact either aggravated, or related without the circumstances which extenuated or annulled the fault. Nor, the ill impression being once made, was it easy, even for herself, to cancel it. A good opinion she could, without much difficulty, destroy; but it was scarce possible for her to dispossess him of a bad one; so that the mischief she did in this way of amusement was irreparable.

But there was another motive besides that catering chit-chat for the entertainment of the king, which principally contributed to the pullulation of that swarm of vermin called spies employed by the government. All ranks, all classes of the people, concurring in one point, the hatred of la Pompadour; this general disposition furnished the lieutenant de police (who was always some little creature, whose tenure of his posts, which is a very lucrative one, depended on his fervility and devotedness without reserve to her will and pleasure) with a fine opportunity of paying his court to her in a strict research for, and report of, such persons as took liberties with her name and character; in which, he took especial care to involve the accusation.

of personal disrespect to his majesty, and to the royal authority: for, without that stale and false association, the lieutenant of police knew he could not give so good a grace to his tale; the marchioness always theatrically professing, that she could with a most Christian charity forgive the injuries to her own honor, as if she had any, but not to the king's, as if she was not herself the person who was robbing him of it; not so much in the being his mistress, as in taking upon herself to be his prime-minister; which, in one of her sphere, either of condition or capacity, was unpardonable. This salvo then readily occurring for any cognizance taken by the lieutenant de police, of such an offence against the king, as was implied by abusing his

mistress, (a cognizance which, at least, gave her the satisfaction of knowing and marking out her enemies) the article of spies became one of the points of state the most diligently attended to, and was carried to a pitch that could not but be an eternal reproach to a government capable of a recourse to means so vile, for so vile an end. Upon this article of spies and informers, a French author of great merit, attributes to the dauphin, in a funeral oration on him, a sentiment which does infinite honor to his memory. "He looked upon informers" (says monsieur Thomas) as the re-
 "source of a weak and corrupt govern-
 "ment, which debases one part of its
 "subjects to do mischief to the other;

“encouraging calumny, by corrupting
“men with making it an object of in-
“terest to them.”

With this motive of personal abuse of the marchioness, there came also to be complicated the dissatisfaction of the public, at the unfavorable aspect and disorder of the public affairs; which were, not without some reason, imputed to her mis-management; as the king's choice of his ministers and generals, was evidently too much swayed by her recommendation of persons more for their personal attachment to herself, than for their intrinsic merit and abilities to serve the state. Towards suppressing then the more than murmurs at the actual system of things, the court had recourse to that most despicable debasement that ever the spirit of despotism

could imagine, for the exertion of the royal authority, the forbidding all orders of the people, on penalty of imprisonment, and of other arbitrary punishments, to talk of state affairs. Upon which edict, the coffee-houses, the public places of resort, swarmed with the licensed spies of the government. A measure, this, which only drives the discontent, seeking evaporation at the mouth, with ten-fold violence back to the heart, where it lies rankling till the first opportunity it can snatch from the oppression of arbitrary power, when it bursts forth into the most outrageous demonstrations. But where such a tyrannical edict has a farther meaning, to conceal from the people, that ill state of things brought on by that very misgovernment of which they are debarred.

the liberty of complaining, it has no other effect than, that, for one evil, it may for a while keep from their knowledge, but never from their apprehension, it gives them room to presume a thousand.

Mean while, this villainous nuisance gaining ground every day, under the auspices and cherishment of the marchioness, and her devotee the lieutenant de police, became and continues unsufferable by any people, but such as those whose necks are grown insensible with callousness under the yoke. The office of the police, instituted originally for the prevention and detection of crimes, as well as for the domestic order and œconomy of the city of Paris, being degenerated into a tool of the ministry, and perverted into a

seminary of such wretches as spies and informers, offers a spectacle at once loathsome and shocking to humanity; while the apology for this horror is one of the severest satires on the French government, in alledging the necessity of employing such rascals for the support of the royal authority; as if it could not subsist without intruding on the private society of its subjects, like an enemy's camp, by keeping spies in it. Nor let it be thought that this word rascal is too coarse a term for them: the French themselves, in general, hold them in as much execration as we do. In confirmation whereof the following story, which is currently received as a fact, may, properly, be allowed a place here.

As, respectively to their various de-

departments and walks in life, these spies are occasionally enabled by the government to make a figure suitable to their ends, one of them had, in consequence of a decent appearance, obtained in marriage, with the consent of her friends, the daughter of a plain, honest, industrious tradesman, who had taken care to give her an education enriched with virtuous principles. A few days after marriage, when, in the course of connubial intimacy, she discovered her husband's way of livelihood, and that he was nothing better than a government-spy, she was so struck with the idea of infamy, inseparably annexed to such a character, that she put an end to her life, by throwing herself into the Seine, having first written to her friends the cause of this act of despair.

But if these wretches, whose circumstances may, sometimes, be pleaded in extenuation of their acceptance of this infamous employment, are so generally and justly odious; what must be the sentiments due to men of birth, of rank, of authority, who do not disdain to employ them, and who are thus the original tempters and authors of their baseness, and guilt; a guilt which is, in fact, a crime of high-treason against human society? And yet a lieutenant de police when he has got his requisite complement of a crew of these miscreants on his register, calls it, *une police bien montee*,—*A fine gang!* though at his levee, when he is giving audience to them, and receiving their several reports of their deeds of darkness, and of the various successes of their in-

fernal mission, he has the air of the devil examining his imps upon the mischief they have done.

Independently, however, of the odiousness both of such means of information, and of the end, which is generally to humor or gratify some worthless minister, this branch of the police costs the government annually incredible sums, which might be so much better employed than in the infamous cherishment of that virmin, diffused like a plague over town and country. For some little good, actual and preventive, which the institution of them may, and very probably does, do, in the detection of real criminals, and persons obnoxious to the laws, the mischief they do to society is incomparably greater, in the distrust it disseminates through

public and private life. There is hardly a nobleman, or private gentleman, that can be sure he has not listening, at his table, or behind the back of his chair, some commissioned spy of the police, who may report any little escapes in the warmth of convivial liberty, or poison some innocent expressions, which may sometimes, be misunderstood, or carried without the circumstance, or context that would render them unexceptionable. Every foreigner that goes to Paris, though but on a scheme of amusement, or curiosity, is liable to this little, dirty, pragmatically meddling of that state-inquisition. It is not that all the reports made by the spies or informers to the police, are attended to, or proceeded upon: no, that would be too

gross; the great officers in charge know the interest of the government too well not to garble their informations: while they laudably attend to the criminal and economical parts of them, and very despicably lay hold of the ministerial concern in them, by way of making their court to power, they let the rest pass quietly enough.

But this attention to ministerial favor, vilely palliated with a respect to the royal authority, was what, under la Pompadour's reign, crowded the prisons and dungeons, especially of Paris, with the unfortunate objects, perhaps less of her own resentment, than of the servility of the lieutenants de police, in their aim at ingratiating themselves with her. And surely hard is often the fate of those victims of

delegated despotism: some of them, and probably the most innocent of them, languish long, under the various horrors of confinement, forgotten, or unheeded. There even, in the proportion to the wrong done them, grows, in the mind of the oppressors, an unwillingness to release them, and put an end to the injustice with which they have been treated. The act of enlarging them, not only appears a confession of error which always comes, with repugnance, from little minds; but there arises in them a kind of confused idea, which they would wish to conceal even from themselves, that such a release restores to the world an enemy the more, who may some time or other seize an opportunity for revenge; a fear not only authorised by nature, but

by policy, in the eyes of which no enemy is feeble enough to be wholly despicable.

But if these frequent sacrifices to la Pompadour's favor excited the public indignation, how much more would the continuance, or adoption of this infernal practice, by the present ministry of France, deserve at once disdain and detestation! Even in a woman of no greater elevation of mind than hers, it was an unpardonable littleness; but language would sink under any attempt to give it a name of scorn equal to its demerit, should it be suffered to subsist under a real nobleman in the post of prime-minister.

We are however told, that, even at this moment, there are detained in the prisons of Paris, persons, who have

languished in their horrid gloomy cells for years, without any fault or crime but that of having offended the minister, at most, by some ungarded expression of disrespect, some cavalier letter or remonstrance to him, which he has been pleased to call impertinent.

But this incroachment on the liberty of the subject was not confined to the controul of conversation. The press in France, never but moving under heavy shackles, was now loaded with greater restraints: under the plausible pretext of reducing to due bounds the licentiousness of writers, a proclamation came out, in 1757, for forbidding, on pain of death, the composing, printing, selling, or publishing any thing against religion, against the royal autho-

rity, or that might tend to disturb the public order or tranquility. The tenor of this ordinance the people of France would even have approved, if they had not seen that the public good was, on this occasion, only the pretext for it, while the motive at bottom was, to stifle the eruptions of the general indignation against La Pompadour: a motive, to which, among many other points, the national interest in the commerce of books was sacrificed; France having, at that time, gained, in that branch, considerable advantages both over Britain and Holland.

The reader here, on reflecting that the frequency of robbing the subject of his liberty was enormously encreased by means of the spies and informers, employed by the state, in complaisance

to the marchioness, or to stifle the murmurs of which she was originally the cause, immediate or indirect, will either allow, that this animadversion on ministerial oppressiveness is no digression from her history; or, if he judges it one, will easily forgive it in favour of it's intention for the service of humanity; should I even add, that the people who can endure such a government, deserve such oppression. But when they boast of it, they provoke much such a pity as the poor cacique of Cuba, who was betrayed into chains, by his taking them for ornaments.

This consideration only the more exasperated the public against the marchioness, whose sensibility was not the less, for these exertions of power, often put to severe trials. Yet, that she was

occasionally a great mistress of herself, and could have wit in her anger, will appear from the following instance. In no longer a space than that of one night, there was committed a mean and pitiful outrage on that little recess of hers before described under the name of the Hermitage. The iron-rails round it were pulled up and carried away, to the amount of twenty thousand weight: not contented with which, the perpetrators of this low piece of spite, destroyed the furniture of the house; tore up the walks of the gardens; and, in the center of the bosquet of roses, they threw down the statue of Cupid, which was an exquisite piece of workmanship. The damage done in so short a time was incredible. As nothing could be easier than for La

Pompadour, by means of the police, to discover the authors and actors of this barbarity, which even the persons of honour among her enemies never approved: she accordingly soon knew who they were that had set this mischief on foot. It is probable she traced it up to some personage too high to be safely made an object of her vindictiveness; which being joined with the fear of increasing the public indignation, by any blood being spilt on account of an offence more immediately personal to herself, hindered her from seeking that satisfaction to which, on so enormous a provocation, she had so just a title. The part she acted was at once noble and wise. She quashed all procedure upon the informations, and satisfied herself with giving orders for

the repairs to be executed with all possible expedition; and, in less than a week, every thing was so perfectly restored, that not a mark remained, either in the house or gardens, of the storm and ravage they had endured. On this occasion, her moderation, whatever was the motive of it, did her honor.

The Parisians, however, heartily detested her, and took every opportunity of giving her the most public marks of it. Whenever she went to Paris, crowds followed her coach, hooting, and showering upon her invectives and maledictions. This proceeded, at length, to such an intolerable height, that for long before her death, she never dared to go thither unless incognito: nor indeed to stir abroad

without an escort of a hundred or two hundred horse.

Neither was she less hated throughout the kingdom: the nation in general held her in the utmost abhorrence. All the evils that befel the state, all the public calamities, all the miscarriages of the war, were currently imputed to her baneful influence. Had the visitation of a plague, or famine, intervened, the populous would have, in their opinion, made this malignant court-star accountable for it; and nothing but their want of power saved her from the dreadfulest consequences of the fury of their prejudice.

The people are rarely favourable to king's mistresses. They look upon the king as so highly born to the dignity of good example, that they never take

well his setting too flagrantly a bad one; but even then, their animosity falls chiefly on the person who is the cause of the disorder. They hardly expect or wish him not to be gallant, but they require his being decent, otherwise he is considered as standing charged not only with his own guilt, but with all that is produced by the imitation of him, which is never but extensive.

But, with regard particularly to La Pompadour, there existed several aggravating circumstances; the lowness of her original, and her being a wife forcibly and arbitrarily taken away from her husband, and kept in defiance of his right; a right ever accounted sacred. His compelled or mercenary acquiescence afterwards rectified no-

thing : it only proved the oppression of despotism or his meanness. It is not, however, improbable that many a one exclaimed against this procedure of the king's, who was only sorry, at heart, for its not being his own wife that was taken away so.

It was also generally resented that, whilst the queen and the daughters of France were barely allowed for expences suitable to their rank, La Pompadour, with her family, was wallowing in immense riches, and had all the royal favors and treasures of the kingdom at her disposal.

It could not be very pleasing besides to that nation, to see the great and ablest ministers of state and generals of armies, either degraded into a servile precarious dependence on a low obscure

woman, so unaccountably lifted up; who was constantly either giving marks of her miserable mistaking the artifice by which she governed the king for a capacity of governing the kingdom; or else shamefully sacrificed to her little passions of vanity or revenge.

Nor was it among the least of her reproaches, that prodigious venality of offices she had introduced wholly to her own profit, and to the apparent ruin of the interests of the nation, which could not but be ill-served by persons, who, having bought their employs, thought of nothing but how to make the most of their bargains. France itself seemed to be put up by her at auction to the best bidder.

There were some popular charges, indeed, against her, which from their

absurdity would scarcely bear repetition, if, in a fortune like her's, and in these times, when truth seems to have taken up her abode in the antipodes to probability, any thing could be absolutely pronounced incredible.

It was said, one time, that she was treating with the king of Prussia for the purchase, from him, of the sovereignty of Neufchatel; nay, that the treaty was concluded, with reserve to declare it, in proper time, and that the money was actually paid: which, however is not extremely probable, for more reasons than one. The motive assigned for this transaction is, that La Pompadour, sensible of all the odium she had incurred, and of the danger to her, in the event of the king's pre-demise, of her falling a prey to her nu-

merous and powerful enemies, might providently have in view to secure for herself, in time, such a retreat.

Her scheme would have been, on the first serious alarm for the king's life, to have had every thing ready to whip into a post-chaise, and make the best of her way to her own dominions; which, at her death, she might, like the Roman Flora, have given herself the patriot airs of bequeathing to the crown of France.

It was also said that, for many years, she had kept in readiness for her retreat a house completely furnished at Bern in Switzerland. Her enemies even gave out, that she had so forelaid matters, in the case of a sinister event, that Britain would have afforded her an hospitable assylum. This last sug-

gestion was, perhaps, a false one; but there were not wanting some reasons for not thinking it intirely destitute of probability.

Yet plain though it stands from facts which admit no dubious interpretation, that ambition, vanity, insolence and artifice essentially constituted her character, it must not be thought that some virtues, or appearances at least of virtues, did not sparkle from amidst all this rubbish. It would be vain to imagine that she could do all the execution she actually did without the assistance of some merit, some good qualities to intercede, for her bad ones, to gloss them over, and even contribute to their effect.

It does not in the first place appear that, with all the world's keenness for

discovering matters of imputation against her, she ever gave it room to tax her with any of those gross gallantries, to the suspicion of which the very sound of mistress commonly leads, and with which this history might probably have been expected to be enlivened. But truth brings with it a pleasure too superior not to compensate that disappointment. Excepting her false step with the king, there lies no reproach against her for want of virtue. Yet is she not for this to be held a jot the more estimable. It might serve her indeed for matter of parade to her royal keeper; but, by the rest of the world, that same chastity of her's, was even less attributed to a constitutional insensibility, and to the more and more damping effect of her growing disorder,

than to her being too thoroughly engrossed by the purely selfish passions to be susceptible of that of love, or even of that turn for gallantry, which so often, passing for love, takes it's name in vain; and for which, nature, the powerful parent of both, has so much more to say, than for those vices, which possess her to their exclusion. She would be thought more pardonable, if she had had the plea of loving the king; but he is the only one perhaps on the face of the earth, that does her the honour of believing she was capable of it, or indeed of love for any one but herself.

It has been before observed, that she had all the accomplishments imaginable, all the talents for pleasing. Happy enough not to be born without wit,

and even a large share of it, which she had greatly cultivated, and, what is more, she loved, or affected to love it in others. Nor with all her meannesses had she that so abject, so compleatly despicable, and so very common a one, of the mock-Mecænas's of the times, who, by way of a good air, pretend to esteem, without being tempted to encourage it; and when they do themselves the honor of a less airy patronage, when some scanty benefit comes hard-plucked from their vanity, or drops a windfall of their whim or humor, it is generally accompanied with so mean and insolent a display of superiority, as to be rather an insult, than an obligation. Sensible that many valuable ends were to be answered, if in no more then improving and refining

her own understanding, by her conversation with those of distinction for genius and literature, to say nothing of that pleasure to be found, so superior to thousands of the more fashionable ones, she gave herself the merit of caressing, of patronizing, and essentially serving, many who had those titles.

The king himself never passed for having much relish for men of letters; and indeed the general silence of them on that head, forms a kind of tacit condemnation. It proves, at least, that his neglect of them has deserved their contempt; for true wit never was ungrateful. It is, on the contrary, too subject to run into the other extreme; as stands attested by all the over-strain of adulation paid to Augustus, and Lewis XIV.

It was then but the greater merit in la Pompadour, to force the king in this his retrenchment of apathy to wit and literary merit. The liberalities with which she inspired him, were a merit both to her and to himself, in whose station of royalty they were but a duty, of which the reminding him was, in fact, right loyal service. The greatest part of the honor of them, indeed, redounded to herself, from whose influence, it is pretty universally conceived, they were derived; there being no great reason to imagine, that they would have come into existence out of his own special grace and mere motion. But, whatever were her motives, she cannot but deserve some commendation for her benefactions, in general, to men of wit and literature. Not always

to make a blameable use of her influence over him, she procured a pension of six thousand livres, or about three hundred pounds, a year for Crebillon the elder. Another she obtained for mademoiselle de Luffan, an ingenious authoress. She countenanced and promoted the interest of Martmontel; and with Voltaire she ever kept on fair terms. Her treatment of the abbot le Blanc, chiefly known here by his letters on the English nation, of which it is plain he knew but little, is not quite so clear. She had prevailed on him to go as a kind of mentor to her brother the marquis de Marigny, in his travels to Italy; whose brutality soon occasioning a disagreement between them, they returned not over-pleased with one another. The sister, too much the sister,

took care that the abbot, in lieu of the great favors she had made him expect, should meet with nothing but rebuffs to his pretensions. At length, she put him off, with what might be rather deemed a refinement of insult, than a mark of regard, the place of historiographer to that same illustrious brother of her's, in his department of superintendence of the buildings; a place than which nothing can hardly be imagined a lower one, except that of historiographer to herself; the reproach of which nothing could well obviate, but the consideration of the lowness of the subject, being compensated by the greatness and importance of its connexions.

Fortune, however, threw in her way an occasion of making some atonement for this instance of littleness, and she had the sense not to let it escape her.

The following story then does so much honor to la Pompadour, that the suppression of it would be a real injustice to her. It may also serve to shew, by the sensation it can hardly fail of exciting, that one virtuous action is sometimes sufficient to cast a lustre great enough to close up the eyes of criticism, to a number of bad ones.

Buissi, the author of several approved dramatic pieces, and especially of one which was deservedly esteemed, called *Le François à Londres*, (the Frenchman at London,) had not found himself exempt from the usual fate of those who cultivate the muses. Even that spot said to be the least barren one of Parnassus, the theatre, had produced to him little more than a scanty maintenance for himself, his wife, and one child.

In short, misfortunes, want of money perhaps, or whatever else might be the cause, I cannot well say but he was reduced to the most deplorable extremities of want.

In this condition, sinking under the indignities of his fate, he had, however, too much of that spirit which characterizes genius, to debase himself by mean applications or mendicant letters. He had friends, whose kindness his need of them had not exhausted, and whom, for that very reason, he was the more averse from troubling. But his friends were but the more excusable, if they knew his distress, not to save him the pain of an application. However, Boissi, overcome with the irksomeness of his circumstances, embraced a resolution of taking the short-

est way out of the wood, that of death: and in the light in which he considered it, as a friendly relief from further misery, he not only persuaded his wife to keep him company, but not to leave behind them a boy, a child of five years, to the mercy of a world in which they had found so little. Probably the example of Richard Smith, in much the same situation, an example to which Voltaire's recording it, gave such notoriety, might have its share in the fatal determination.

This resolution now formed of dying together, there remained nothing but to fix the manner of it. The most torturous one was chosen, that of hunger; not only as the most natural consequences of their condition, of which it might pass for the involuntary effect,

but as it saved a violence which neither Boissi nor his wife could find in their hearts to use to one another. In that solitude then of their apartment, in which the unfortunate need so little apprehend the being disturbed, they resolved to wait with unshaken constancy the arrival of their deliverer, though under the meager grim form of famine. They began then, and resolutely proceeded on their plan of starving themselves to death, with their child. If any one called, by chance, at their apartment, finding it locked, and no answer given, it was only concluded that they were from home. Thus they had all the time they could wish to finish their intention. But what can deceive or damp a true friend? They had one, it seems, of a fortune

not much superior to their own, and whom, for that reason, and for the dread of being an inconvenience to him, they had never acquainted with the extremities to which they were driven. This friend, who had often called at their apartment, and finding it shut, always naturally concluded, as others did, that Boissi and his family were gone out, or perhaps removed. Upon reflexion, however, or from that kind of instinct with which the spirit of friendship abounds, he began to apprehend that something must be much amiss with his friend, as he could not find him at home, nor gain any intelligence about him. Under this anxiety he returned to Boissi's apartment; and whether any motion or noise from within betrayed his being

at home, or whether his friend began to suspect something of the matter, no answer being returned, he forced open the door.

Boissi and his wife had been so much in earnest, that it was now three days since they had taken any sustenance; infomuch that they were got so far on, in their way to their intended home, that one may say they touched the gates of it.

The friend, entered as he was into the room where this scene of death was going forward, found them already in such a situation, that they seemed insensible of his intrusion. Boissi and his wife had no eyes but for one another, and were not sitting, but supported from falling to the ground by two chairs, set opposite to each other,

their hands locked together; and with their ghastly looks, languidly dejected; in which might be read a kind of rueful compassion for the child that hung at the mother's knee, and seemed as if looking up to her for nourishment in its natural tenaciousness of life. This groupe of wickèdness did not less shock than afflict his friend; who collecting from circumstances the meaning of all this, his first care was not to expostulate with Boissi or his wife, but to engage them to receive relief, in which he found no little difficulty. Their resolution had been taken in earnest; they were now got over the worst, and were in view of the port. The faintness which had succeeded the tortures of hunger, had almost reduced them to a state of insensibility. They

might besides conceive a false shame of not going through with what they had thus resolved; as if it supposed a failure of firmness. The friend however took the right way to reconcile them to life, by making the child join his intercession. The instinct of self-preservation operating its usual effect on him, he held up his little hands, and, in concert with the friend, entreated his parents to consent to all their relief. Nature did not plead in vain. The friend then proceeded, helpless and unattended as they were, to procure them immediate food, with proper precaution and cordials. Nor did he quit them till he saw they were in a way of recovery, and given them all the money he had about him. Thus Boissi, by his tender care, escaped at

Paris giving the second edition of the tragedy of poor Otway in London*.

This story instantly took air, and was, among the news of the day, carried to la Pompadour at Versailles, where she was parading in quality of queen of her little circle. Among her schemes for amusing the king, it was not her least, that of picking up for him all the town stories and current anecdotes, to which she knew how to give such poignancy and embellishment by her manner of telling them, that the constantly renewing pleasure they afforded his majesty, formed one

* OTWAY, the author of *Venice Preserved*, the *Orphan*, &c. literally speaking, died of hunger, being choaked by the first piece of bread he took after a long and involuntary fast.

of those links of his chain, which so great a lover of amusement could not find the easiest to break. It was no wonder, therefore, that so singular an adventure should not escape her. One of her emissaries brought it fresh to her from town, and it became instantly the topic of conversation among all the company there assembled.

Most of them received it with the utmost insensibility and indifference, and some of them thought it a good jest spoiled, that the poor devil did not go through with it: an author starved to death, hah! hah! hah! To none was it matter of much surprize, nor of indignation, but to la Pompadour, and the count de Tremain, who was, only by chance, at that illustrious levee. La Pompadour was really

moved; it even hurt her in the character she affected of the Mécenas in petticoats. She was going instantly to furnish him with solid marks of her sentiments on this occasion, when the marquis de Marigny, that same right honourable brother of hers, interrupted her by a long speech, tending to prove, that Boissi, with all the scribbling crew, as a proper punishment for their arrogance, deserved to be starved. This he delivered in the true stile, and consonant with the manner of thinking of the modern nobility of that blessed country: a nobility into which this favorite of fortune was so congenially incorporated, that he almost seemed to have been born in it.

If any thing could possibly have added to that profound contempt, in

which la Pompadour held her brother, his speech would have done it; and the count de Tremain, who had not heard Boissi's distress, without suitable emotions of indignation, could not refrain the reply he thought due to that speech, so worthy of a genius he despised.

“ Surely (said he) my good lord
“ marquis of Marigny, the patronage
“ of learning and genius is a birth-
“ right of nobility, and therefore, my
“ lord, worthy of the protection of
“ one of your high rank. If some au-
“ thors have made a base pernicious
“ use of their talents, the shame and
“ infamy is personal to themselves,
“ and not chargeable to the spirit of
“ literature. For my own part, mar-
“ chioness, I know the delicacy of

“ your understanding too well, to pay
 “ the least regard to the speech of the
 “ marquis.

“ Boissi’s pieces on the theatre have
 “ often given me so much pleasure,
 “ that I conceive it a kind of ingrati-
 “ tude in me, not to have entered
 “ enough into his circumstances, to
 “ prevent his being reduced to extre-
 “ mities, so reproachable to all who
 “ knew him ; I am heartily pleased,
 “ however, that it is not yet too late
 “ for me to give him marks of my
 “ regret.”

As for la Pompadour, she needed
 no stimulation to relieve him, beyond
 that of her own taste, and a desire of
 distinguishing herself in the character
 of a patroness of literature. Not con-
 tented, however, with sending him

instantly a hundred louis d'ores, she procured him a place then vacant, of no inconsiderable income; that of comptroller of the *Mercure de France*; with a pension on it to his wife and child, in case of their survival.

It was not, without some dilatory pretensions of her own, that la Pompadour had deserved the honor of thus relieving the distress of an author. She was, herself, an authoress, and had learnt to make verses under la Noue, a celebrated comedian, to whom she had besides great obligations for his forming her to a true taste for the beaux art.—Nor can it be denied, that the lessons of that great master of comic execution, have been of infinite service to her in the course of her transactions in life, in

which she has, figuratively speaking, shewn herself a very great actress.

It is no wonder, then, that so many men of letters, should have made a favorable mention of her, and that even some amiable philosophers did her the honor of certain very delicate allusions, in which the picture of the royal mistress being prettily painted in profile, the blemishes of it were artfully kept out of sight.

Nor did she withall neglect the patronage of the other liberal arts; music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. The putting indeed, that tasteless brother of hers at the head of them, in quality of superintendant, has at the first an untoward aspect; but, as if she was conscious of his defects, and of the justice of supplementing them, she her-

self in some manner officiated the post for him. All applications were made to her by all the artists in these several branches, and there was no eminent one she did not distinguish and encourage. She not only visited herself the work-places of those employed in the mechanic arts, but brought the king with her, to whom she pointed out and recommended their respective merit. For some she obtained pensions, lodgings in the Louvre, and other advantages and distinctions. The tapestries of the Gobelins and the carpet-works of the Savonnerie, felt her beneficial influence. There had been a royal manufacture of earthen-ware, established at Vincennes, in imitation of the Dresden porcelain, which she took under her special protection, and having

caused it to be transferred to Seve, placed it in a spacious, commodious building, purposely prepared for it, where it has attained great perfection, and not only kept at home the sums that used to be sent to Saxony to procure the ware of that kind, but has brought in money from other countries. Her advances and income in it were at length so beneficial to this undertaking, that it became the object of a bequeathment from her, in a legacy to the prince of Soubize. Nor did she fail of making a due parade of all these laudable attentions, serving, as they must, to place her in a respectable point of light to the king, who could not but see the fitness of them, and, withall, their tendency to do him-

self honor. They were national services, from the known effect and power of the royal cherishment to raise great artists in their various professions, and especially in those which have for their object, either those public decorations which illustrate a country, and draw a profitable resort of foreigners to it; or those articles, of which the prevalence of luxury having made a kind of necessary of life, they would, if not to be found at home, be sought for abroad, to the detrimental extraction of specie from the kingdom.

But she was not, it seems, reserved for an exemption from the great and general rule, that no perfectly true taste can exist where there is a want of elevation of sentiment, or of that

superior dignity of mind, which does not appear that she ever had. She could not help falling into the current of the national passion of the French for baubles and false refinements of taste. If the liberal and solid arts were countenanced by her, she did not the less favor those frivolous ones, that are in the pay of effeminate nicety or vain curiosity. Studied ornaments of dress, new inventions of fashions, toys, trinkets, change of apartments for every season, quaint devices in furniture; in short, all the precious trifling of fanciful luxury, seemed to divide her favor with the nobler objects of talents and genius, much in the style of a woman sharing her smiles so equally between a man of sense and a fop, that it is hard

to say which is preferred ; though the world, rarely disposed to the most favorable side of a doubt, generally suspected, from those two characters, being naturally not made for a competition, her rather inclining inwardly to the worst ; and her outward regard for the other, served her only for a cover, or as a kind of saving composition, for her reputation of taste.

It has been said, that la Pompadour had an exquisite taste ; but as that has been observed to be incompatible with any littlenesses of mind, falsity of the heart, or affectation of mis-becoming points of distinction, there would perhaps be greater propriety of expression, in saying, that she had an uncommon fancy. Many proofs of it might be given, but one may suffice.

On a visit the king paid to her at Bellevue, that beautiful seat he had built for her, at so lavish an expence, that no invention was wanting to art, nor any art to luxury, La Pompadour, who was prepared for his reception, led him into an apartment, of which, at one end, folding-doors opened into a parterre on a level with it. It was the depth of winter, and the first thing that met his sight, was a garden, composed of ranges of flower vases, which were in full blow, in all the liveliest colors of the spring; while, at the same instant, his smell was struck with a diffusion of their sweetest natural odours. This could not, however, be but a momentary illusion, since the flowers were no other than artificial ones of porcelain, in the nicest imitation of nature;

and the scent they exhaled, proceeded from the flowers being strongly impregnated with each its peculiar essence.

This deception appeared, indeed, ingenious to the king; but it gave the courtiers room for a remark, that there could be nothing, in or out of nature, into which she had not the secret of breathing superiorly the spirit of artifice. This notion generally prevailing, but not without her having given sufficient cause for it, made all her actions suspected, and none so much as those which appeared the most plausible. Even the tribute of grief she occasionally (and it might be unaffectedly) paid to the feelings of nature, so far from being allowed to do her the honor it deserved to do

her, if it was but for her attention to save the appearances of duty and humanity, was construed into an artful abuse of them, to the purposes of falsity and pretence.

When monsieur le Normant de Tournéhem, who, in the character of her presumptive father, had taken so much care of her education, was struck with the apoplexy, of which he died, some time after she was in favor with the king; on the first news of his danger, she flew to Estiolles, a seat and estate from which her husband Normant, his nephew, takes that addition to his name, by which he is most commonly known. She saw the uncle, who was then there, but insensible and past recovery. The violent signs she gave of affliction were, most probably,

or at least for the greatest part, real and unaffected. It would have been too brutal an insensibility, too enormous an ingratitude, not to have felt for the loss of one, who, in the accomplishments he had given her, had laid the foundation of what she esteemed her good fortune. She staid fifteen days at this place, digesting her grief; having had the precaution to have d'Estiolles acquainted with her journey, that he might not meet her there.

It ought not to pass unnoted, that she ever kept good measures with Paris de Montmartel, who had been joint-keeper of her mother with le Normant de Tournéhem. She might not care for attacking, in him, a man she could not be very sure was not her own

father; of which there was, at least, an equal chance of his being so; the air of her face very much resembled his, and he ever currently passed for her first minister; nor was any one more capable of giving her the most effectual councils for turning her favor to the greater pecuniary advantage. He was one of the capital farmers of the revenues, and exorbitantly rich.

One of her ways of making money of her influence and ascendance, was, indirectly, and by means of creatures chosen for that purpose, and in whom she could confide, to act as brokers. With these, deposits were provisionally made, of such sums as were agreed on, in proportion to the point that was to be carried through her means. On these occasions the retention of the de-

posit depended on the issue; which, however, was generally favorable; but, if not, the money was faithfully returned.

As to d'Estiolles, that so cruelly deserted husband, who, in marrying her in the teeth of so many objections, had made her first best fortune; her conduct to him on his return to Paris from Avignon, where he had been exiled and at the point of death for her sake, greatly manifested the mixture of lights and shades that enter into her picture; in which, however, the latter very strongly predominate. She shewed, indeed, at a distance, some remains of regard for him; but all the marks she gave him of it, were so palpably adulterated with vanity, and particularly with that artifice which

constituted her specific distinction of character, that the greatest merit of them was lost from the imperfection of the stamp of the heart on them. Even her most plausible acts of reparation to him, appeared to have their origin more from her silly pride of king's mistress, than from tenderness for an injured husband; of whom, too, in the midst of all her ramparts of greatness, she could not have but some dread; so great and sacred is the authority of the name of husband. But, whatever was their motive, they were all sure to carry with them a dash of trick and contrivance, even where the nature of them did not seem to require any; just as there are some who lye constitutionally, in indifferent matters, purely for lying sake; and indeed, what arti-

fice can there be that is not strictly resolvable into a lye, in action, or in words?

He had, as has been before observed, fallen into a libertine course of life, and kept a number of low women. La Pompadour taking the scandal of this to herself, as she well might, since she was the occasion of it, imagined the remedy would be to provide him a mistress in form; a mistress of a certain rank and character to attach him to her and take him off the common. In this view she got him, under-hand, recommended to a creature or at least a dependent of her own, one madam de la Mothe, the widow of an officer of the cavalry. He was caught with the lure thrown out to him, engaged with her, and had a daughter by her. But poor

d'Estiollles was not, it seems, born to be more happy in a mistress than in a wife. He soon discovered, not only that she was guilty of infidelities to him, but that she was a kind of spy upon all his actions, which were immediately carried by her to his wife, in whom he could not approve so over-officious a concern about them, after her so manifest a forfeiture of her right to it. He discarded, then, this mistress; but could not help, on his wife's positive insistence, allowing her a very considerable pension. As to the child, la Pompadour having her reasons of equity to consider it in some measure as her own, she provided for it in a manner that strongly characterizes that vein of artifice which ran through her whole conduct.

It must be observed, that the laws and customs in France being in many points unfavorable to illegitimate children, this of d'Estiolles must have been consequently involved in the general disadvantage, both as to the stain of birth, and even as to matter of interest. But to obviate this inconvenience, la Pompadour took measures for a gentleman being found for her, one of the clearest nobility, unmarried and poor. The search had not been either long or difficult; such a one was presently brought to an agent of hers; whose first question to him was, whether a hundred thousand crowns (twelve thousand five hundred pounds) would be of service to him. His answer was conformable to his circumstances. He was then informed of the

condition on which the sum would be paid him, which was precisely as follows: He was to choose any wife for himself, that he should like best, provided she was his equal in birth, to be married in the face of the church, and in which ceremony was to be included the bridegroom and bride's passing the child of d'Estiolles under the canopy held over them, during the service, for their own, as if begotten between them before marriage.

This form, it seems, is allowed a full legitimation, to all intents and purposes, of any children, belonging to both parties, though born to them out of wedlock. It has been sometimes seen that three, four, or more, and some full grown, have stood under the canopy that covered them with their

father and mother, while the nuptial ritual was reading; upon which they become instantly vested with all the rights of the most lawful issue. But then it is held a fraud, if the children thus covered are not truly and properly those of the parties who thus own them, or not by them believed to be so, of which they are required to make a solemn declaration in the face of God and the people.

The greatness however of the proffered sum removed all scruples; the condition was accepted, executed, and the child of d'Estiolles, thus covered, entered at once into possession of all the honors and privileges of lawful and noble birth. She bears the name of the family into which she is thus admitted, and la Pompadour, by her

interest, took care that she should not want the benefit of her own qualification.

She procured her since to be chosen one of the canoneſſes of Remiremont; to be received among whom it is neceſſary to make proof of a clear and antient nobility on both ſides of deſcent from father and mother. They are taken in at any age, and ſubject to the regularity of a convent-life, though without renouncing their temporal eſtate, or taking any vows; ſo that they may marry when they pleaſe.

Many laughed, and more were ſcandalized at an abuſe of a church-ceremony, that was but a kind of forgery; but all diſcovered the finger of la Pompadour in this piece of management. Another inſtance of that of her

having constantly mixed contrivance and design in every thing she does, offers itself in the following transaction of hers, with respect to her husband.

D'Estiolles was lodged, together with his sister, madam de Baschi, at the hotel of la Valiere, in hired apartments. La Pompadour's vanity was hurt, by his not having a house of his own ; and, as she was at the same time desirous of his getting one that should be answerable to the high idea of dignity and importance she had annexed to his being the husband of his majesty's mistress ; she was not a little embarrassed how to prevail on him to purchase such an one.

D'Estiolles, though a lover of pleasures, was far from liberal even in them, but in all other points he was

rather avaricious. She could not expect that he would readily disburse so large a sum as the acquisition of a fine house would require. She could indeed have advanced it herself, and not impossibly would have made that sacrifice of her interestness to her vanity, but, that the happy turn of her head for art suggested to her a contrivance to carry the point without expence to herself.

There was one monsieur Bouret, an officer in the revenue, a creature of and dependent on monsieur Machault, consequently attached to la Pompadour, and who, from beginnings moderate enough, had got a very large fortune. He was besides a man of wit and pleasure. He had built one of the noblest houses in Paris, and furnished it in a style of the greatest magnificence. One

drawing-room alone had cost him above eight thousand pounds: every thing in it, to the very wainscoting and window-shutters, being what they call *vieux lacq*, or old japan. Another article, certainly of more expence than taste, was a large closet lined throughout with fine looking-glass, sides, floor, ceiling, and doors. All the joints were hid by festoons of roses and garlands of flowers, painted on the glass, by the best hands of Paris. This may suffice to give an idea of the value of the house, in which every thing was in proportion.

Bouret, who knew that la Pompadour passionately wished her husband in a house of that figure, made her a *tendre* of it, which she gladly accepted, and concerted, with him, the following

scheme for surprizing d'Estiolles into the acceptance of the offer that was to be made him of it.

One evening that Bouret was at supper with d'Estiolles, at his sister madam de Baschi's, with other ladies, he took occasion to make the conversation fall on the inconvenience of hired lodgings, and offered to d'Estiolles, to sell him that fine house above-mentioned, with all the furniture standing. His answer was, that he could not possibly afford so much money, as it was natural to think he would ask for it. After a great many motives of persuation, in which Bouret chiefly insisted on the cheapness of the bargain it should be to him; to all which d'Estiolles continued inflexible in the notion it could not come to so little as he

was willing to give ; Bouret at length staggered his resolution, by proposing to refer the peremptory naming of the sum to d'Estiolles's own mistress, madam de la Mothe, then present. This d'Estiolles could not but think very favourable to him. There were two things that probably he did not, at that time, know ; the one, that Bouret was violently suspected of being on the most intimate terms with that faithful mistress of his ; the other, that she had her cue from him.

Between jest and earnest, however, he consented, that de la Mothe should fix the price, which she accordingly did, as had been pre-concerted between her and Bouret, at a hundred thousand livres, somewhat less than five thousand pounds, though the

house and furniture were richly worth a million of livres, about five and forty thousand pounds sterling.

Bouret affected a surprize, as he well might : but said, since he had given his word to abide by the lady's award, he would not affront her so much as to retract it. D'Estiollles, who could scarce not smoke some mystery at the bottom of this, acquiesced meanly enough in an agreement, the interest of which was so visibly and so unconscionably on his side : the bargain was instantly ratified by a regular bill of sale to him.

But Bouret knew very well what he had been doing. In three or four days after, he received from la Pompadour, a patent for a place in the post-office, worth a hundred thousand livres a year.

Thus ended this farce; perhaps only memorable for its furnishing a proof of the most considerable employs in the kingdom having been the sport of that woman's vanity and whim.

Many more instances of the like nature might here be produced, if the multiplying them unnecessarily would not look too like giving a rhapsody of the town-chat of Paris, or of stories caught from the pages of lackeys of the antichambers, and circulated among the public.

As to the unobservance of dates, or of the order of facts, there can scarcely need an apology for it. There are few that would not even be displeased with seeing a history of this nature treated with such a gravity and dignity of exactness as if it could have any pretensions to them.

It is presumed, it will be accepted for sufficient, that scarce any of those essential historical strokes of la Pompadour's life should be omitted, which, marking the character, serve to establish a compleat idea of her. As to veracity, those, it is, who are already the best acquainted with her history that will hardly not feel what so rarely but makes itself felt, where it exists, that truth has been always the aim, even where it may have sometimes been missed or mistaken through misinformation or want of judgment. To them especially it will be evident that the measure of what may be strictly verified, greatly exceeds what may be unavoidably false; and to the candid will consequently atone for it. They will disdain to condemn the whole for

any error in small circumstances indifferent to the principal of the story.

But to return to the subject: la Pompadour though she looked down upon her husband d'Estiollles as comparatively a little creature honored with her concern about him, and in fact treated him with all that air of protection and superiority; yet, such is the power of a husband's prerogative, that it has been penetrated that in secret she was not without anxiety for its ever coming into his power to re-claim it. Though she did not see him, out of respect to the king, she occasionally wrote to him in the style of a powerful friend afraid of an inferior, and got for him every thing he asked or that was consistent with the measures she thought herself obliged to keep with

the royal favour. On his part, thoroughly detached from her, he used to speak slightly enough of her to persons of his confidence. He knew her thoroughly; and, no longer blinded to her faults by his love, he only remembered her ingratitude and her artifices; of which he could have given a pretty numerous catalogue.

The public judging impartially between them, pronounced without hesitation, that it was only for a mind so thoroughly infected with false ambition and vanity as her's, not to see that even the success of her premeditated designs upon the king, tended to the injury of an indulgent husband. For tho' she was in the bosom of affluence, eternally to her reproach, an exchange of the tranquillity of innocence for the

disquiet of guilt, of honor for infamy, she was doubtless more truly respectable in the character of wife to d'Estiolles than in that of mistress to a king.

Certainly then, if she was not too well assured before-hand of the king's weakness for her, it must be with the worst grace imaginable, that she could, with all her artifice, sound so high those sacrifices to him of her gratitude, duty and fame, that must have cost her so little, since she had of herself fore-laid them. Or if they were sacrifices at all, they were, at least, evidently made not to his passion, but to her own predominant ones of vanity, interest and others of the like nature, of which love could never be of the number, who never but disdains to be joint-tenant

with them in the same heart, or even to admit them to subsist under him. No! the love that can serve them or with them, can be nothing but an impostor, and that a rank one.

On this occasion a reflection naturally rises which needs no apology for its admission. Here was a wife openly torn from the arms of a husband distractedly fond of her, and kept in defiance of him; consequently his property violated in the most sacred and tender point. No redress for him but arbitrary punishment for daring to assert his right; no resource but that of a passive acquiescence. After this instance (and many more of the most grievous oppression might be produced from French history) must it not appear extremely pleasant to an Englishman to

hear the subjects of that nation denying the existence of their despotic government, when reproached with it? for a reproach they admit it to be, and, what is stranger yet, naturally and with all the simplicity of self-persuasion, inveigh against despotism, without seeming to know or dream that they themselves are crouching under the compleatest form of it in the known world. Their courts of justice, their forms of procedure, their appearances of laws and magistracy, are evidently all nothing but the masks of that arbitrary power, the face of which they hide, only to make that power the more secure and permanent. The bulk of the people, rarely any where penetrating beneath the surface of things, does not see, though they are

sure, at times, to feel, the fangs of that monster despotism lurking behind all that dazzling pomp of order and state; a tyranny politically mitigated, reduced, in short, into system, and only the more detestable for the being so. It would be better if that tiger was never seen with its grim muzzle and its sharpened teeth; it would be less dangerous by its inspiring more aversion and more distrust; as it is, when it is high-fed, well stroked and humored in all its whims by its kind keepers, the people, it knows very well how to put on occasionally an air of tameness; then indeed it will draw in its claws, and, murmuring like a cat in pleasure, presents a velvet paw.

But how much preferable is the franker, honefter, barbarism of a

Turkish government, disdaining all those refinements of artful policy, in which alone the grand-signior at Versailles differs from the grand-signior in his seraglio at Constantinople? Or in what is the summary process of the bow-string, a greater grievance than the murderers in form by court-commissiaries? What pity would not be due from humanity to the French if their native slavishness of heart did not sink them beneath it? Yet that the very court which has forged for the people those chains, surely not the less chains for the nicety of their make or the glare of their polish, is in some measure sensible of their misery, may be inferred from its constant endeavours to procure them that cruel consolation the miserable find in having

all numbers to share their wretched fate, as if too that could lessen the shame of it. This may at least be one of the reasons to be given for the rage, in that court, of propagating slavery by every art of conquest and extension of dominion, in the presumption of a readiness in other countries to receive those chains, from having already tried them with such success on subjects that seem born for them, are vain and fond of them, and most certainly deserve, since they can so gaily wear them.

But, leaving them to their fools paradise, or in their dream of enjoying that liberty which they have lost so long, let us resume the thread of our history. On the husband's forced acquiescence to, or desistence from, his claim of right, the marchioness remained at Versailles,

triumphant, in plenitude of power. Nay, the duration of it received still a stronger degree of security, from that very circumstance which made so many bespeak its decline, the cessation of all sensual commerce between the king and her, for many years before her death. All the danger to her ascendant had lain in the first moments of uncertainty, as to what turn his sentiments for her would take, or the exclusion of attachment. But when that crisis was conquered, there was more to be hoped by her than to be feared, from one of his character, rather too apt to mistake the weakness of obstinacy, which is itself a passion built on passions, for the virtue of firmness, which is never founded but upon reason.

She had, in the first place, after that,

longer to apprehend that palling effect of satiety, from which love itself, when at the happiest, is not always happy enough to be exempt, nor always sure of not feeling, in a less or greater degree, those disgusts of satisfied desire, which almost appropriately fall to the share of the men, and constitute, with them, the usual ingratitude of enjoyment.

She was also, by a sort of innocence from gross guilt, made much more secure against his change toward her from another cause, which she had had before principally to dread, and which it may not be amiss to specify somewhat at large, as much of her fortune and dependence were connected with it.

In the countries enslaved to the Ro-

man-catholic superstition, there are two periods of life particularly liable to feel the tyranny of it.

The first, that of very tender youth indeed, when the mind, before its having gathered firmness enough, is, from its softness and flexibility, apt to take the stronger impressions of what it is taught to receive as sacred truths. Some of them doubtless are so, such as the idea of a Supreme Being, and the pure doctrine of religion; but these awful certainties are abused by the sophistification of them with the most ridiculous absurdities and the grossest nonsense, which could not even pass with children, nor especially keep their hold, in the age of reason, unless for their having been originally introduced in such excellent company, of which

they are taken as an essential part, and from which it therefore becomes hard to separate them. These early youth embraces, with all the fervor, the enthusiasm and unexamining simplicity of that age. Thence it is, that those horrid jails of superstition, the convents of both sexes, are peopled with those wretched victims of their own innocent credulity, of which artifice and design take so infamously cruel an advantage, to make them deceive the destination of nature, the laws of which are so undoubtedly the laws of God.

The other period is the decline of life, when the weakening powers of it, open nearer and more alarming prospects of futurity. These bring back with redoubled force all those prejudices of childhood, in which the great

est falsities having passed, promiscuously involved with the greatest truths, with no distinction but that of the principal stress being ever laid on the falsities, to save or damn, as believed or rejected, so many, for want of a manly strength of judgment, necessary to the garbling of the truths from them, imagine it the safest to swallow all together; as what, at least, can do no harm, if it does no good. The more faith, the more merit, and down they go glib. Idle, silly notion! cause of so much perseverance in error; as if it could be entirely matter of indifference to a God, who is wisdom itself, whether he is worshipped in folly or not.

To these seasons of the mind's infirmity, sympathizing with that of the

body, in the early and later stages of the human existence, may be added, one not less productive of corporeal and mental weakness, and common to all ages of life, the accident of sickness. These seasons are the seed and harvest-times of superstition; and that this double-weakness then forms her greatest strength, is not amiss proved by her choosing for her preferable object of conquest, the female sex, which she emphatically affects to honor with the distinctive epithet of devout.

It may be observed, that as to the first period, that of tender youth, the station indeed of princes exposes them in it, to the strongest efforts of superstition to get them into her power; from the prospect of greater protection and advantages, in future, of which

her success lays the foundation. But then that very station, generally speaking, defends them afterwards as they grow up, from the gloomy excesses of her seduction, she herself being, at the age of strengthened reason, supplanted by the functions of state, the display of power, and the dissipations of pleasure. I have said in general, only, because I am not unaware that there have been, and perhaps are, some exceptions.

The first period, however, being entirely passed with la Pompadour's royal gallant, was consequently out of the question.

As to the other, the later season of life, in which he was entered, the danger from it to her power, on the continuance of a commerce more liable to

the compunctions of conscience, in proportion as the fire of youth and its passions should subside, was the most to be apprehended. Kings would be happier than other men in that superior officiousness of their spiritual guides, for the sake of the access that office gives them, to remind them of their duty, if these directors would but honestly do theirs by them. But, instead of drawing their arguments from that pure spring, the love of God, sole origin of all that is good and great in speculative or practical religion, from its inspiring that beneficence to society, which carries so strongly his own divine stamp upon the heart of man, they think it more for their interest, to instil or cultivate in them the fear of the devil.

Knowing how much greater a force fear has than hope, the chief battery they employ, is the religion of their own forgery, presented under penalty of the torments of the heathen's purgatory, or of the eternal flames of hell. These terrors ofteneft operate to their wish, which is never without some design in their own favour, and for their own interest. No wonder then that their effects should take the tincture of that slavish dastardly passion from whence they proceed, and to which the honor of being a homage to God is so falsely attributed; while in fact, that homage is no other than what is, with infinitely more propriety, paid only by the Indian savages to the Devil.

Thence those childish superstitions,

those silly outward ceremonies, those fooleries, to which so great an efficacy is annexed; thence so often, what is worse yet, those infernal persecutions of consciences for the sake of a God, whose peculiar prerogative of dominion over them is thus usurped, and who cannot but hold in the utmost abhorrence those cruelties which are the work of weakness, practised upon by artifice; and of power, made the tool of superstition.

As to the hour of sickness, open, for the same reason of weakness, to the same insidiousness, the king had already given a proof of his subjection to that dominion of fear, by the dismissal of la Tournelle, whom he had just created dutchess of Chateau-roux, which took place during his illness at

Mentz ; and whom, as it were to show that the resolution of it was purely owing to the terrors inspired by that situation, he recalled the instant that the danger was over. In vain : for he never saw her again, she dying suddenly after his message to her, as has already been mentioned.

But, as to la Pompadour, she got very well over these flats. Circumstanced as she was with the king, absolved in due form for the crime of her past commerce, and safe in the innocence of that which she kept up with him, so far as the exclusion of mere sensuality could make it innocent; she had little to fear from the representation of those directors of the royal conscience, who never let slip an occasion of exerting their spiritual autho-

rity, if but for the sake of keeping it
 up, and to whom all degrees of right
 and wrong are so equal, that they will,
 with the same zeal, insist on banishing
 a king's mistress from his presence, or
 millions of his innocent subjects from
 his dominion. They owed besides a
 particular grudge to la Pompadour,
 for her counsel of neutrality between
 the clergy and parliament. But where
 could they take their text of objection
 against a woman who was entitled to
 her Eastern-communion?

The Jesuits had precedently, at
 various times, and by various means,
 attempted to disquiet the conscience
 of the king, as to his commerce with
 the marchioness, whom they had not
 found submissive enough to the dictates
 of their society, and whom they sus-

pected of thinking more freely of their order, the interest of which they never fail of confounding with those of religion itself, than stood with their constant system of governing the court, according to their maxims. They did her the honor, and perhaps the justice, of ranking her among those who saw through them. And, as it was ever their spirit, to laugh, in their sleeve, at the ignorant, on whom they imposed; but, to detest those on whom they could not pass their gross **nauseous** artifices, la Pompadour was accordingly in this last class of the obnoxious to them. There was also some spirit of party mixed with their animosity against her. The heir-apparent of the crown, whose education had been entrusted to a bishop, of perfect morality,

but of narrow, circumscribed notions, in matters of religion, and greatly partial to the Jesuits, was supposed to have taken a strong bias in their favor. As his dispositions then towards the marchioness could not be presumed over-favorable, that artful set of men might not be sorry to make their court to him, by any ill-offices they could do to la Pompadour. Accordingly, they devised every expedient, and some of them pitifully clumsy ones, to alarm the king and to procure her dismissal. The old battery of the terror of hell flames was opened, and play'd off, but without effect. The marchioness triumphed over all their efforts, and, doubtless, did not think herself obliged to society for them. It would be too much to say, that, her resentment

against them operated their downfall and extermination. There were many other causes concurred, and not the least of them was an indiscreet zeal of the famous Beaumont, archbishop of Paris, who, in endeavouring to do them a service, in a scheme originally laid by him, to crush their old adversaries the Jansenists, contributed, not a little, to bring on the catastrophe in which the tables were turned upon the Jesuits. This gave occasion to a celebrated *bon mot* of monsieur Laverdy, the comptroller-general, who, on the king's asking him, if he went out as usual, in a morning, a shooting with the archbishop, replied, "*Je n'ai garde, Sire, c'est un tircur trop maladroit : il a visé au Jansenistes, et a tué les Jesuites.*—I take special care, may

“it please your majesty, not to trust
 “myself with so unlucky a marksman;
 “one who could take aim at the Jan-
 “senists and kill the Jesuits.”

It would not then be fair to attribute to the marchioness intirely the effect of other co-incidences. But, when the point came to be ballanced in the king's mind, whether he should gratify the parliament or not, in its projects of exterpating that wen, or excrecence, on the body politic, the growth of which had been encouraged by superstition, by ignorance, by neglect, and especially by the weakness of false fears, there is no doubt but the disposition of the marchioness might contribute a little to the casting a weight in the scale. They fell then, and the institutes of their orders, like those

gloomy mysterious groves of the heathens, to which superstition had annexed ideas of religious terror, became contemptible from the moment that light was let into them.

During the whole of this affair, however, la Pompadour behaved with great circumspection. Duly sensible that her appearing to intermeddle on the side to which she wished success, would only hurt that cause, from the unpopularity her name would bring to it, she gave no opening for any reproaches for her activity in this transaction.

By the like spirit of discretion she governed her procedure towards the dauphin, whatever were her inward dispositions towards him. In essential points, she had undoubtedly done him

no kindness. It was not till the year 1757 that he obtained entrance into the cabinet-council, just after the affair of Damiens, in the hurry and confusion which that accident had bred; but we do not find that he had ever any material influence in the great points of the state, which remained chiefly in the hands of la Pompadour, and her creatures, or adherents. While, on all occasions of matter of form or ceremony, the marchioness ever affected a parade of the highest respect for that prince. On his recovery from the small-pox, she gave a splendid entertainment, at Bellevue, in gratitude for his deliverance from that dangerous distemper. The decorations exhibited on that occasion, were very splendid and very tasteless, to judge of them by the

frigidity of the allegory, on which they turned, in a childish allusion to the dauphin's name. A dolphin in the midst of a great piece of water, attacked by several monsters, vomiting flames, and delivered from them by Apollo; after which the scene changes, and the dolphin re-appears, in all his glory, in the palace of the sun, amidst illuminations and transparents. This offers nothing to the sight beyond a taudry opera-scene, with garden-fireworks, and must disgust every judicious spectator, with the flatness of the device. But it was with incomparably more good sense that she celebrated the birth-day of his son, the duke of Burgundy, by marrying and giving a portion to all the marriageable girls

upon her estate; in which she was imitated by monsieur de Montmartel. It is also said, greatly to her honor, that if even the thought was not originally hers, she adopted and suggested to the king, this infinitely preferable channel of public rejoicing and festivity, by turning them at once to the good and advantage of the kingdom, in encreasing its population, to the satisfaction of a number of private individuals. The city of Paris alone gave portions to six hundred girls, the marriage of whom was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. The example was followed, in many provinces of that kingdom, by some corporations and companies, as well as by many of the great, who took that occasion of paying their court to the

king. It was computed, that this just and refined stroke, at once, of humanity and good policy, which indeed, ought never to be separated, procured above two thousand weddings to France, with all the consequent advantages to population. The charge of destination of the sums usually expended in such rejoicings, by an application of them to promote the nuptial state, was generally approved of, even in France, even in that country, where a so much greater number of both sexes are suffered to pronounce those horrid vows against the will of the Supreme Being, so clearly signified by the strongest instinct of nature; vows which stop, as far as in them lies, a propagation of individuals for the more extensive worship and glory of God, as well as for

the service of the common wealth. An inconstitence this, which may be added to many other manifest ones in that nation, of which one would think the people formed to prove, as strongly as ever was proved, in any private person, that extreme wit is not incompatible with extreme folly.

The marchioness did not confine her complaisance to the dauphin; she extended it to the queen, whose favor if she could not well hope to gain, she aimed, at least, to mitigate her resentment. She had, it is true, by dint of the royal favor, forced herself into the queen's service, under the title of her Dame du Palais, which, with other invasions of her right, could not place her in a very favourable light to her majesty; but even this just aversion,

could not entirely hold out against the superior artifice of la Pompadour, who knowing how agreeable it would be to the king, that she should appear on tolerable terms with the queen, compassed, at length, the point of being endured, by her studying her humor, by adapting herself to it, and by every sort of condescension; occasionally affecting even fits of devotion, and airs of spirituality.

But all this soothing management, all these little arts, so easily seen through, could, at the most, only palliate, and keep from breaking out into extremities, the sentiments of the royal family. The queen, the dauphin, independently of their sensibility to the diminution, on her account, of their own natural influence, could not but in proportion

to their affection for the king, keep up a fund of aversion for her. They could not, without a grief the more intense, for their respect not giving them the liberty to vent it, see a woman of this kind so scandalously at the head of his history, or rather herself his whole history, constantly betraying the daughter of a Poisson's wife by the mean and silly insolence of her vanity, and the wife of a farmer of the revenue by her gaunt eagerness after money; at the same time that no stronger proof need be required of her having loved nothing in him, but his power to gratify those passions, than those passions themselves. Once more, there is no one who knows any thing of love, but must know how incompatible with it they are, in their very essence. Or

could there even be such a thing, in nature, as mercenary love, it must partake so much of dirt and meanness, as to have, like fruits forced by putrid muck at the root, ever a dung-hill-taste.

She was not content with draining from him an unconscionable profusion of grants and gifts, and often making the most pernicious advantages of his favor, but, though saving enough of her own, kept collaterally urging him to the most exorbitant expences, in those pleasures and amusements she suggested to him, or to which she encouraged his natural inclination, instead of exerting her effectual influence and control to restrain them, as she could not but have done if she had had a real regard for him. On the contrary, she

remained faithful to her system of governing him, by an art, which is so often, it seems, not the less successful, for its being so stale and so trite an one; the appearance of being herself governed by him. Thus, with a flexibility that gained her all her ends, she adapted herself to all his moods and terms of temper, like the creeping plants, which, as they climb, follow and humor the bent of the tree they wind round and prey upon.

She attended and presided over all those parties of pleasure in his frequent journies to Fontainebleau, Marly, St. Germain's, Choisi, La Meute, which are not only so ruinously expensive to himself, that the revenue of the crown stands mortgaged or anticipated for several years in advance, but to the

nobility that accompanies him. A circumstance very little minded, especially as the disorder of their private fortune makes them more dependent on the court. Deep play, hunting and trifling form the whole circle of dissipation in those jaunts, and stunning all serious thought, greatly take off the attention due to the business of the state, which becomes therefore at the most a second and subordinate consideration. It was in course perfunctorily managed, and stood committed only to such ministers as la Pompadour chose or were agreeable to her. This supposes no very great dignity or elevation of mind in those who could tamely submit or acquiesce in such a tenure of their places.

The truth is, that she had surround-

ed the king with those little creatures of hers, over whom she could extend her empire, even to their not daring to say any thing to him that she had not dictated to them. Thence it was that any truth that interfered with her private views could rarely penetrate to the royal ear ; or, at best, could be but indirectly suggested. An instance of this last did not a little divert the court.

One day, as the king on some occasion went to Paris, which he did very rarely, from an aversion he was supposed to have taken to it, on his knowing the disposition of that town towards La Pompadour, the populace gathering, followed his coach, not with the usual acclamations of *Vive le Roi !* or “long live the king !” but with

loud cries of "bread! bread!" and this in spite of the guards who rebuffed and even threatened the people. At the same time they loaded the queen with a thousand benedictions.

Incensed at all this, on his return to Versailles, he mentioned it with a mixture of acrimony and concern. One of La Pompadour's creatures taking it up, said that he wondered at the people's unreasonableness; that they were wantonly crying famine over a heap of corn; for that, to his knowledge, the quartern-loaf was sold at some low price that he mentioned. The honest marquis de Souvré, the hero of the elbow-chair story in the first part of this work, could not with any patience hear so gross an imposition; and, taking up his hat and gloves,

made as if he was going out in a hurry. The king calling to him asked him the reason. "Only" says he, "may it please your majesty, that I may go this instant and have that rogue of a steward of mine hanged, for his charging me double the price for my bread, of what that worthy gentleman assures it to be." This set the whole presence a laughing, but does not seem to have set the king a thinking.

It has been shown how disgustfully disqualified la Pompadour came to be for being the king's mistress in one sense, and how undeserving of it in almost every other; but if she was so little fit to be a lady of the bed-chamber, she was still less so for a lady of the cabinet. Little artifices and petty

passions could never make a stateswoman or a great minister. Yet she aspired still higher and assumed all the authority of a despotic mistress, that gave what motion she pleased to the state-machine. Mean-spirited councils naturally enough coming from her, and not the less followed for their being so, ministers were disgraced, generals were recalled, at her imperious nod ; and all of these, for the worst, signalized her power and her want of discernment.

In the mean while, this deference of the king, rather to her fancy, or to her little passions, than to any exertion of her judgment, gave a ridiculous air to the royal authority, besides subjecting the most essential interests of the state to the ill-consequences of such an instability of councils in the so fre-

quent remove of the great Officers ; an evil which has not, however, been quite peculiar to France. This gave a lady of the court an occasion of trying to make the king sensible of the impolicy of such a weakness. Being in the circle, in the presence-chamber, just as he was in conversation with her, she made a short parenthesis, by speaking to a gentleman of her acquaintance who happened to be near her, " I should be much obliged to you, sir," says she, " if you would do me the favour of going to such a new-made minister (naming him) and present him with my compliments of congratulation." As he was going, she recalled him. " But, harkee me," added the lady " I wish you would make haste ; for, if you stay a moment,

“ you may not find him in place.” This shrewd hint did not extremely please the king, nor, probably, made on him the intended impression. He only turned upon his heel and left the lady, who would very likely not have hazarded the insinuation, if she had not loyally preferred his good to his favour.

For most certain it is that, this subversion of all order and dignity threw a general languor into the administration of affairs. The subjects of the greatest rank, merit and abilities, were either driven into corners, or voluntarily shrank from the indignity of places that could only be held on the scandalous terms of paying court to a woman, constantly jealous of not having enough of that respect shown her, to which she

must be conscious of having so little title, and but the more intent on hiding that meanness of her's, by an insolence so much fitter to prove and expose it. The consequence of this must be the filling of the places thus vacant with petty characters, whose greatest merit could only be the having none, as no merit could there exist, but what must be incompatible with a submission to her, or with sub-ministring to the will and measures of a woman who visibly sacrificed to her own private passions, the king who was governed, and the kingdom that was dishonored, by her.

At length this deadly blast of all ardor and emulation for the service of the public, ran through all orders, from the highest to the lowest. Numbers of

that nation, in that enthusiasm of theirs for the glory of their king, which would have so much more noble a spring in the love of their country, and in the cause of their own liberty that would be included in it, were ready enough to sacrifice even their lives to the hopes of obtaining the royal favour. But even these, on supposing them any sentiments of honor, could not be but very indifferent to that favour, if only to be had through a la Pompadour. The most gracious gift, the most merited rewards, must come greatly lowered in value, through so foul a channel. She could procure nothing from the king honorable to any one, but his disgrace.

It is even highly probable, that some officers who, in the pursuit of their

promotion, had not disdained to pay a particular court to her, received the punishment of that meanness, in the ill-consequences to their reputation, from the unpopularity of their patroness. From her having frequently made a bad choice of subjects for the service of the state, it was, perhaps too violently, concluded, that she could never make a good one; or, at least, every ill success in those who were known, or believed, to have been recommended by her, was imputed to her want of judgment or to her partiality. Thus the disadvantage of the French at the affair of Minden, was currently, by the bulk of that people, made a crime of to the marshal de Contades, and placed to the account of his incapacity. Many, however, to

whom the marchioness was perfectly indifferent, or rather, who held her too cheap, to let their judgment receive the injury of any bias on her account, could not, in the circumstances of that engagement, see occasion to blame Contades. Upon the most fair and candid relation, it appeared that the good or bad issue of the attack capitally depended on the decisive moment of the surprise being seized or missed. That lost, every thing was lost; so that if Broglio, instead of halting to chicanery orders, which it was his duty implicitly to obey, and thereby losing those infants so precious in war, because they are, generally speaking, irretrievable, the French would not improbably, have had a better account to give of that day than the actual issue of it al-

lowed them. Even as it was, prince Ferdinand was, undoubtedly, in a great measure, unprepared for the attack; and if, fortunately, a handful of the British troops had not, at that juncture, behaved like surprised lions, and, by their superhuman valor, repelled and broke the first ardor of the French onset, the whole army must have been defeated or taken prisoners. By all accounts, then, the disposition made by Contades was admirable, and could hardly have failed of success, if Broglio had not, against all the laws of military subordination, loitered away the moment of surprise, on the pretext of taking for an impossibility, what was, perhaps, not so much as a difficulty. The torrent, however, of the public prejudice, ran so strong against any

officer, notoriously preferred through the influence of la Pompadour, that the whole of the blame was generally thrown upon Contades, for the miscarriage of that affair. It is here worth remarking, though somewhat digressively, that, before the engagement, a foreigner of the highest distinction, then a volunteer in the French army, was heard to say, that if they were beat, there would be an end of the campaign for that season. Whoever will but grant a question, surely not unreasonably begged, that it never was, nor could be, the interest of France that Prussia should be crushed, may, without over-refinement, without even supposing a direct express collusion between the two courts, perceive in the actions of Rossbach, of

Minden, and in the consequent behaviour on both sides, a sort of sneaking kindness for one another, which made France not quite so trust-worthy a friend to the Austrians, as the situation of the empress queen obliged her to pretend, at least, to believe. Here I lay no stress on the report of two regiments of cavalry belonging to the Prussian corps having declined charging the French in the affair of Crevelt, as it is natural to suppose, that such an alarming refusal could not have escaped the animadversion and public resentment of that patriot ministry which had carried the precious war into Germany, or, what was worse yet, revived it there.

Some other instances might be produced in favor of the marchioness, and in exception to the general rule

from which, in quality of favorite, she was supposed to govern her choice, less by merit, than by the degree of personal attachment to herself, is that eternal rock, so fatal to favorites in general, with whom the public utility, the most confessed merit, and even the interest of their thus ungratefully treated master, never weigh any thing in comparison with that personal devotion to themselves, which the meanest and the most worthless of men, are ever the readiest to pay them. Nor, indeed, had the marchioness herself that requisite elevation of mind, that genius for the discernment of great talents, which never goes without the love of them. She might be a queen in the kingdom of Bagatelle, but the state itself was a sphere above her. It was

faid, not without reason, that la Maintenon, who became the lawful, though never declared, wife of the grand monarch, had just precisely hit that point of understanding, above or below which, she could not have accomplished her ends. With less of wit and sense, she would have failed, in course; with one who did not want for either, with more, she could never have conquered his natural jealousy of superiority. It was that exact proportion of her intellectual merit to his, that happy hit of mediocrity, which obtained and secured her ascendant, with the aid of her conformity to his growing terrors, from religion, of which she made a handle to draw him in to so strange a match. What the widow of Scaron then was to Lewis

XIV. in the serious way, the wife of d'Estiollles was to his successor in the frivolous one, and won by it her empire over him: and, in both, there was pretty near an equality of artifice, though exercised on such different objects and in such different ways: and who does not know that a recourse is ever the surest sign of a want of that superiority of genius which for ever disdains it?

The very government itself, under the influence of the marchioness, took a complexion of air and finesse in all its transactions. The losses in Germany, and the abortive operations in the revenue, planned by M. Silhouette with the best intention in the world, but too crude, too premature, to stand against the combination of that power-

ful body, whose interest it was, that the malversations he attacked should remain on foot; had produced a deficiency of money, and a failure of credit. One remedy, among others, imagined for this, was that famous act of council, exhorting the subjects to send their plate to the mint, to be coined for the uses of the state, of which the king set the example, by sending his: now, though the distress was incontestably real, the recourse to this petty expedient was, for more than one reason, liable to the suspicion of much such a lowness of artifice, as a la Pompadour might congenially enough suggest.

France had some allies, for whom, at bottom, she was perhaps very little concerned; some others whom it was her real policy to support; and one

especially from whom she actually received such secret assistance of all kinds, as greatly contributed to her carrying on the war. This act then, so solemnly and strikingly declaratory of poverty and inability, answered the double end of rendering her needy allies less immoderate in their demands of subsidies, and of giving her the better grace in pressing her opulent one, to continue or increase his aids. This was also collaterally as moving a circumstance to all the well-disposed subjects, many of whom imagined that his majesty had not left himself a silver-spoon to eat his soup with. The working silversmiths had, however, reasons not to be sorry for this strain of ways and means; since many persons who were sensible of the joke of the

thing, and had sent their plate to the mint one day, bespoke a new set the next.

Another political scene given to the public, was so offensively rank of that spirit of artifice, which breathed, about that time, throughout the French councils, that the wonder was it could be attempted to pass on any but the merest novices. This was the famous family-compact, between the courts of Versailles and Madrid. All Europe knew that, long before the late war, and especially during it, that very event was come into existence, the apprehension of which had excited the war terminated by the peace of Utrecht, the too close and dangerous union of the two branches of the house of Bourbon, on the thrones of France

and Spain. The court of Madrid had long subordinated its councils to those at Versailles, and subjected its conduct to their direction. It had not been thought expedient for the Spaniards to come to a direct rupture with us; but, so far as was consistent with their interest in keeping clear of that point, they omitted nothing that could prove their attachment to the French. Partial decisions in their courts, preferences in their treatment, and communications of councils, all proved their friendship for France, and their hostile disposition to Britain, in a manner that scarce saved appearance. The money in circulation, by the pay of the French forces, in most of the southern parts of France, was almost wholly Spanish, without the trouble of recoinage; in

short, those two powers were so united, in all essentials, that the committing to paper any terms of alliance, or compact, was a form perfectly superfluous, and was very probably less discovered by the policy of another court, than let out by themselves. As, surely, the coming at the prodigious secret of their union, which was only the secret of the comedy to all Europe, could not be worth the wax and paper used in the instrument of its ratification, of what service could it be to Britain, to know that the two powers were united in words, when the whole world knew they had been long so in facts? The letter surely could not quicken more than the spirit. This divulgation, however, might answer many purposes for France, but especially that of tran-

quillising and encouraging her own subjects, while she, no doubt, took care, by redoubling her cajolery of the house of Austria, in marriages, and fair promises, to make such a measure go down with it, as was very fit to alarm its political jealousy. Unfortunately for our nation, the ill consequences to Spain, from this union (which only served to draw that union the closer between the two courts, by making to them a necessity of its continuance; and did them, besides, the good office of quieting the jealousy of the rest of Europe) were all ballanced in their favor, by the destructive circumstances of our continental war. Allusively to which, an English gentleman at Paris, received from a French abbot, an answer, which cannot fairly be esteemed

an improper one. The former, just after the late peace, was, in a coffee-house, venting his political notions, with a liberty which the French government indulges to strangers, with a politeness, by which its interest certainly does not suffer. He had taken for his text the celebrated la Pompadour, and was observing how expensive her favor had proved to the king. The abbot, who, perhaps, at bottom, did not care a pinch of snuff for the marchioness, but out of pure love of truth, made him, very civilly and coolly, the following reply : “ This marchioness
 “ that you twit us with, is not, at least,
 “ a foreign dominion; make but a
 “ fair abstract of all that you have to
 “ place to the account of the wretch-

“ed pretexts employed to draw you
“in to meddle with the continent, and
“you will find, that one Hanover will
“have cost you more than a hundred
“Pompadours.”

It would, however, be doing here great injustice to the reign of the marchioness, not to make some mention of the flat-bottom-boats, the sublime invention of which was currently attributed to M. Berryer, a minister of the marine, a creature of her favor, and entirely devoted to her. It was not improbably among the arts of the court, to pretend to adopt this scheme, so far as it might contribute to amuse the people, who were either so silly, or so ignorant, as to resume a possibility of carrying such a nation as Great-Britain by a coup-de-main, to be executed in

boats, only something superior to the galliots of the Pont-de-Seve. This was not a bad burlesque of the Spanish armada, in queen Elizabeth's time. To be sure, it was very likely that the French, who could do less than nothing, with a superior force by land, should do every thing with an inferior one at sea; and especially, that a gang of French slaves, all dragging their chains after them, should conquer a nation of free-born Britons. The gudgeon-fry of the populace swallowed, indeed, this nonsense; and some of the Parisians really thought there was something in it. But, even in that nation, there were not wanting such infidels as would neither believe that, nor so much as the existence of the flat-bottom-boats, at least, in any number to

signify. It was, in short, confidently said, that, in all the ports of France, put together, there were not thirty of those bug-bear boats provided to waft over her smuggled armies, and steal a conquest upon us; and that we were precautioning ourselves against a chimera. I do not pretend, however, to say that this was entirely one; but this I know, that, both at Paris and at London, chimeras are not without their use of amusing the people, and of answering special purposes. Policy often compasses its ends, by means which, though they appear absurd and ridiculous to persons of sense, succeed not a whit the less for their grossness; nay, the better for their grossness, with that infinite and powerful majority, the small and the great vulgar, who are not only

too often the bubbles of imposition, but would knock any one on the head, that should attempt the dangerous task of undeceiving them, especially if the deception is dear to their humor, or adverse to their interest. It would not, however, have been, previous to such a project of invasion, whether real, or a feint, a misplaced, or unfriendly advice to the French, that, before they think of robbing other nations of their liberty, it would be incomparably more honorable of them to recover their own.

Mean while, that war was proceeding, which had already cost to mankind near a million of lives, which a little common sense in the councils of princes, with a grain of humanity, might very well have saved, without any detri-

ment to their respective interests, but rather much the contrary. At length, however, a train of losses falling on France, from the exertion of the strength of Britain on her proper element, where it was almost impossible for her not to succeed; and these losses combining with the wretched figure the French made in the execution of their schemes of the cabinet, by their officers in the field of Germany, and also with the deficiencies of their revenue and credit, disposed the king to wish for a peace, that might restore him to more tranquility and leisure to pursue his favorite amusements. Naturally a lover of ease, war was always a violent state to him; and who does not know the influence, that the personal inclinations

of princes have, on the greatest human affairs? He had, some time before, refused to enter into a negotiation of peace, the offer of which had been made him by the kings of Britain and Prussia; but that refusal was less an act of his will, than the suggestion of his council, from hopes which, not being realised, restored him to his pacific sentiments. The marchioness, who had ever made it her constant rule to study his humor, and to adapt herself to it, with all her flexibility of character, took great care to cultivate and improve a disposition so favorable to herself, both with him and with the public, which was grown so heart-sick of the war, and of which all the miscarriages were by it imputed to her. Whether she had exhausted her origi-

nal stock of pleasantry and humor, or whether her growing infirmities and decline of figure, had diminished her power of pleasing, and destroyed the effect of her attempt to do it, certain it is, that, latterly, she could not help perceiving, in the king, a certain weariness of all the popular clamor against her, of which he was himself hurt by the rebound, and, of the subsiding of which, there was so little likelihood while the war continued. Private interest, then, combining with public necessity, engaged la Pompadour to second, with all her power, any motion, for putting an end to the war, and to seize the first overture that should offer for that purpose. Accordingly, on the demise of the late king, all that was purely personal to himself, in the motives of the war,

died in course with him, so that no obstacle was left to a peace, but such as was, and indeed ought always to have been, the only one, the national concern in the war. The advantages obtained, or likely to be obtained, by Britain, in the course of it, appearing, if not to the multitude, at least to some sincere well-wishers to their country, not to be "adequate" to the ill consequences inevitably presumable, from the ruinous circumstance of the German war, which, like a mill-stone, had been fastened about the neck of the British one; this opinion prevailed, and a negociation for peace was begun; in which, among other particulars, there are three very remarkable points. First, the di-judication of the limits of our dominion in America, was left un-

der at least as vague, underterminate, litigable circumstances, as that in which they stood before the war: Secondly, That, whereas the keeping such a small inconsiderable acquisition as makes no sensible difference to the rest of Europe, was ever allowable to the party who has had the superiority in war, while such a claim is not admissible where the conquests exceed that proportion; Guadaloupe, the retaining of which could threaten no alarming shock to the ballance of power, was, in fact, an implicit confession of its being sacrificed to our continental connexions. The gaining much, is often, in politics, only a reason the more for giving up much, but never for not keeping a little; and what we did keep, in the loose way it was worded, was less than

nothing. Thirdly, Some of the articles, were such rank nonsense, as to be contradictions in terms. This negociation was, however, broken off, though soon after resumed, and brought to a conclusion, on terms insisted upon to be inadequate by no one, more than by the very man whose conduct, in replunging us into the German war, had made their not being better a necessity, which was virtually confessed, even by himself, in what he himself gave up, and which he might, with some shadow of reason, have made a point of keeping. The people too, in general, were so infatuated, that they did not, or would not, see that those very naval successes, which were their motive of murmuring against the peace, for being inadequate to them, were, in fact, the

greatest proof imaginable of the cruel injury done to the nation in that German war, since the palpable depopulation of our country by it, and the ruinous expence it had occasioned to us, were manifestly the cause why we were disabled from keeping and improving the advantages we had obtained on that natural element, which we had so ungratefully and impolitically subordinated to another, which we had nothing to do with; and, to mend the matter, senselessly took the part on it diametrically opposite to our interest. However, as unsatisfactory as the peace was here, it was still less so to numbers of the patriots in France, who judged the sacrifices made by the court, on that occasion, to be greater than the necessity of the state required.

So much, however, is certainly true, that great, very great, as that necessity really was, it was rather exaggerated. The resources of France, though low, were far from exhausted; so that she was much more to be suspected of a temporary yielding to a peace, only for the sake of taking breath, that she might return better prepared to the war, than of an utter inability to continue it. Our own condition was not, either, a very permanent one. Our ministers might not, possibly, have made more paper-money; but whether cutting our paper-men into effectives, at a muster, was not a miracle beyond their reach, is rather a question. And as to mercenaries, the nation had pretty good reasons to be sick of them.

The peace, then, was made, towards

which the marchioness had contributed every exertion in her power; the Choiseuls, who were possessed of the greatest share of her confidence, had the management of the negociation, with all the appearance of being nothing more than the executive instruments of her springs of direction. Warned by the fate of the cardinal Bernis, they omitted nothing of an outward shew of respect, to keep fair with her, while their power was as yet too young to contend with her influence. They seemed even to adopt her spirit, and in many points of government to take their line of conduct from her. But they did not the less make use of the advantages her favor had given them, to fortify their hold of power, and to make it difficult, if not

impossible, even for herself, to compel them to evacuate it, if she had a mind to it. She soon became sensible, that, without their giving her any direct handle to complain, they were insensibly reducing her to a state of insignificance. If the king himself continued that assiduity of his to her, of which not only habit, but decency of procedure, made a kind of necessity to him, she plainly discerned there was no longer that warmth of heart in his behaviour towards her, nor that efficacy in her suggestions to him. His authority was thrown so much into the hands of the Choiseuls, that, very possibly, without his knowing it himself, he was, in some measure, obliged to give their opinion the preponderance. And as la Pompadour was no longer pos-

essed of those personal charms which could inspire a passion great enough to overcome his love of ease; she had now no arms to oppose these encroachments on her power, which were made with all the respect imaginable. This procedure too hurt her the more, for that she had, on many occasions, herself given proofs of her sensibility to gratitude, and that even to persons of inferior note.

It has been precedently mentioned, that la Pompadour had, in her earliest youth, cultivated all those talents and arts of pleasing, which afterwards became the principal means of her tenure of favor and power: nor was she ungrateful to those masters who had procured to her a proficiency in them. She was ever especially remarkable for

her recital of favorite passages of plays, to which she did great justice in correctly placing the emphasis, and preserving the due degree of the pathetic, for which she was the more qualified, by a voice naturally harmonious, and by a vivacity of comprehension. For this her theatrical accomplishment, she was, so far as that art can be taught, indebted to one la Noue, an actor, who, to his merit in his profession, joined that of an excellent personal character. It was then very commendable in her, that, when her fortune raised her to the power of recompensing this service to her, she behaved with great liberality to him, and continued his avowed patroness, with the satisfaction of being generally approved both for her choice and her sentiments.

This lady had, however, received one mortifying baulk in her project of adorning her character with the honor of protection and munificence to literary merit. It was in the person of the celebrated Rousseau that she met with this disappointment; and probably it is the only one of that nature she ever met with in the whole course of her favor.

But, to do justice to this incident, it is necessary to premise certain facts, which led to it, and which, it is to be hoped, will therefore appear less digressively than episodically related.

Rousseau, with a natural propensity to examine freely, and philosophically, all the great objects of human opinion, had discovered, what it is hardly possible for a thinking man not to discover,

that, generally speaking, it was precisely the points of the greatest importance to mankind, that the prevailing decision was a false one. That great chemist Stahl had long before laid this down for a general maxim, to which he admitted but very few exceptions. It is a maxim too, which, the more it is examined, the more true it will be found, in even the three capital concerns of the human race; physic, politics, and religion. So that whoever goes to the bottom of these subjects, must inevitably, if he publishes his thoughts, shock the prejudices of by much the greatest majority of mankind; in which case he will be let off cheaply, if he incurs nothing worse than the reproach of paradoxology; the air of which his writings must ever

have to the multitude who dissent from him, especially if he does not enough keep measures with their self-love. There are certain prejudices, which, like princes, require the being treated with respect; not, God knows, for any intrinsic merit of theirs; but for the rank they hold in the world. It was probably then more for the cavalier manner in which Rousseau, in the teeth of vulgar prejudice, treated the subjects of his discussion, than for the side he took in the question, that he fell under the character of a paradox-monger. Besides, that this way of getting rid of a contradictory assertion, by calling it a paradox, is often much easier than the answering it. This is a remark extorted from me by candor; for as to that problem, “whether the

“ arts and sciences were more useful or
“ more pernicious to man,” in which
the part he took against them, was his
first introduction to literary reputation,
I am as far from agreeing with him in
his opinion, as I am from imputing
that opinion of his intirely to a love of
paradoxes, or of singularity. I rather,
on that occasion, see in him nothing
but a philosopher sincerely seeking the
truth ; and, in his imagination of hav-
ing found it, communicating it to man-
kind, in the genuine spirit of phi-
lanthropy. He reasons too much from
the general misuse incontestably made
of human learning ; as if that misuse
was, in the essence of things, as in-
separable a consequence of it, as
learning itself is from man consider-
ed as a progressive animal. He did

not sufficiently distinguish between real and false knowledge; which last is the case of infinitely the greater number of pretenders to merit in the arts and sciences, and misleads much more than downright ignorance: neither did he see clear enough, that while an insufficient degree of knowledge (and indeed perfection in it is given to no man) carries a man away from nature, into the regions of false and pernicious refinements, a higher degree of proficiency will infallibly bring him back to her, and to that simplicity of judgment, which will give him all the advantages of knowledge, without the dangers or inconveniences of savage ignorance or brutallity. Nothing, in fact, is more true, than that the man of the deepest learning in the world will ever be

found the man of the greatest simplicity; the man the most penetrated with all the essential virtues of undepraved nature; moral love, friendship, patriotism; an affection for universal society, and a boundless veneration for the Deity. In some points the two extremes will touch. With all the modesty inseparable from that profound knowledge, of which, all paradox apart, the great specific character is a just consciousness of knowing nothing, in the sense that Socrates made his confession of ignorance, the true philosopher will, in the midst of a populous city, retain as fierce a love of independence and liberty, as the arrantest savage in the most sequestered shades of the wildest forrests. Like the savage, he will spurn all distinction.

not founded on personal merit, and coolly abstract man from his fortune, or, indeed, from every thing that is not the man. If he descends so low as to animadvert on the follies and vices of princes or kings, it will never be from Cinic vanity; and surely less yet, from a malignant envy, where the greatest pity rather is due; it will be for some good presumably to result from such notice as he may do them the honor to take of them, in the moral to be extracted from it; and to greater effect, from facts or stories taken from real life, and especially from what is so vulgarly and so falsely called high-life, than from fables, in which speech is poetically given to animals, and life to stocks, or stones; things indeed scarce less animated than

some men. The true philosopher, in short, will have all the benefit of the savage's natural virtues purified from all the vices and defection of the savage's natural ignorance. But it is only for reason, set to work by the lights of learning, joined with the intuition of genius, to accomplish that refinement of the native ore, from the dross and impurities with which it is produced originally mixed. Rousseau is, in this view, to be quoted for an example against himself. It is not without great literary merit, that he has been able to plead against literature, or probably to discover the objections, some of them very just ones, which he makes to it. He has drawn conclusions, not only from the misuse to which the arts and sciences are but

too liable, but what is worse yet, from the generality of that misuse. This would be very fair, if he had at the same time stated the gross errors, the pernicious delusions, to which natural ignorance, in its childish simplicity, is so dreadful and so deplorably exposed, and from which, it is only for learning to defend or rescue it. Where learning has been made the base instrument of successful imposture, it can be only conquered or exploded by learning, in alliance with philosophy, that greatest friend to mankind, by whom it is so often treated and persecuted as its greatest enemy.

The part, however, which Rousseau embraced in this dispute, contributed to raise him to that degree of celebrity, which made la Pompadour desirous of

adding him to the list of the men of letters, to whom she had done herself the honor of being serviceable. Having been sufficiently apprized of Rousseau's delicacy, as to receiving any favors, especially pecuniary ones, she contrived to put the present she intended for him, into the best and least exceptionable shape she could imagine. Knowing that among his ways of procuring a livelihood, the copying music was one, she bespoke of him an opera in score; and, to pay him the flattering compliment, that opera was one of his own composition. Rousseau very readily executed the task, and la Pompadour on receipt of it sent him a rouleau of an hundred Lewis-d'ors. Rousseau, though certainly in not very paramount circumstances, gravely de-

ducted from that sum just so much and no more, than he would in conscience have charged any other indifferent person, and returned the rest, with a cool compliment of excuse, which rather wounded the pride of la Pompadour, as she imputed this rejection of her favor, to his honor, of an obligation to a person unworthy of conferring one on him, or at least of being considered by him as an exception to his general rule of talking, No money but what he fairly earned. Most probably, however, he would not have had the same scruple, if, instead of la Pompadour, the king had sent him a gratification. Nor was this act of disinterestedness accompanied, on the part of Rousseau, with any ostentation. He did it simply and unaffectedly, without boasting

of it, since it became only known to the public, from la Pompadour's own declaration. She had also the generosity, not to give to the king, which it was intirely in her power to do, any ill impression of this singular and eccentric personage. This appeared very clearly, on an occasion in which the king gave to Rousseau a memorable mark of that humanity for which his personal character has been always eminently distinguished; a mark which, as it does honor to his heart, I risk even the reproach of a digression to particularise here; the pleasure of it making me some amends for the pain it gives me in being incidentally compelled, by the nature of my subject, to touch on any of his weaknesses or infirmities.

After that Rousseau had published his *Emilius*, (in which, with too little faith to be admitted among Christians, and too much to be ranked with the Deists, he breaks his neck between the two opinions, and became obnoxious to both parties,) the French clergy took the alarm at this book; and, being put into motion by the archbishop of Paris, set on foot a persecution against him, which soon made that kingdom too hot to hold him. It is here previously to be observed, that, with all the despotism of the court, it is however obliged to keep certain measures with the ecclesiastical power; by which, in return, it's own horrid mode of arbitrary government is supported and authorised. The clergy then, having made a point of proceeding against Rousseau, pre-

vailed so far as to obtain an order for the security of his person, which would have been infallibly executed, if the king had not, with great goodness and humanity, given timely notice of it to the dutchess of Luxembourg, that she might acquaint Rousseau of his danger, and of the necessity of his taking immediate measures for his escape. Then began that series of his misfortunes, his illegal banishment from his own country, the ridiculously shameful persecution of him by the false zeal of a little obscure curate of a village in Neufchatel, with other vexations which at length terminated in bringing him to Britain, where he had the greatest occasion for promising to himself a happy end of all his sufferings, and to pass the remainder of his

life in the bosom of ease, tranquility, liberty, and the general esteem, even of those who did not approve his religious tenets. Unfortunately he foundered here in port. A letter most probably never intended to produce the effects to which it actually gave birth, a letter which, though written in sport, was death to poor Rousseau, raised a jealousy in him, of his worthy and innocent friend, with as little grounds for it as Othello's handkerchief, and brought on that cruel rupture between them, which does so little honor to the philosophy of either.

I now resume my subject, and hasten to that period in which the marchioness, closed the scene with her final exit. She had long languished under

the sense of her diminished influence, the more galling for that measures were so plausibly kept with her, by the Choiseul party, that appearances did not allow her the relief of complaint. Her spirits were sadly sunk, and any endeavour to force a gaiety, was as vain as it was aukward. Gone was all that sprightliness which had once captivated the king, by its power to divert his natural turn to melancholly, and charm his tedious moments. What with her growing infirmities, what with the quick sense of the decline of her influence, she was become a burthen to herself, and, perhaps, to the king, who, though he ever continued to treat her with all the politeness and good-nature of his character, could no longer find

those attractions in her company, which had been, in the time of her health, such a relief and resource. But, how different were the attentions paid by decency, from those paid by love! Nor could this difference escape notice from her sensibility. Embarrassing the scene which she once enlivened, but still without resolution enough to quit Versailles, she appeared in it like the plaintive spirit of a departed beauty.

It is very probable, that her consciousness of this situation, did not a little contribute to accelerate the period of her life, by producing that pernicious circle, in which her melancholly increased her disorder, and her disorder her melancholly. She had long contracted a bad habit of body, owing originally to a relaxation of the vessels,

which she had too much neglected, and which came at length to a height, that admitted little hopes of a cure. Towards the middle of April, 1764, her distemper was on a sudden grown worse, in a quicker measure than the languor of it had before manifested. The physicians who attended her, soon saw that it was got beyond the reach of their art. It was then that, on properly guarded intimation of her condition, she appeared very sensibly reconciled to the necessity of resigning life, of which she had long seen, and felt, all the vanity. In her last hours, she shewed neither bigotry nor irreligion.

About two days before her death, she took her leave, very affectionately, of the prince de Soubise, with whom she had maintained a constant friend-

ship; and put into his hands a casket of jewels, which she desired him to carry to the king, and deliver to him in her name. The value of the contents was not specified, but was judged to be very considerable. Soon after, the king, who had constantly visited her, during her final illness, came to her chamber, and had a short conference with her, of which the subject never transpired; very probably there was nothing more in it, than the melancholic ceremony of taking leave. Before he left the room, she desired madam d'Offset, who was her dame de confidence in waiting, to open her bureau, and reach her, out of it, a port-folio, which, considering it was stuffed full of nothing but papers, was, literally, a very heavy one. This she put into his

majesty's hands, who took it away with him. It was said to contain the bulk of the fortune she had amassed, by the misuse of his favor, and for which she now made some amends, by disposing of it to himself. It was reported to consist of bills, bonds, bank-notes, and the like, to the amount of thirty millions of livres, or about twelve hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

This was the non-ostensive part of her acquisitions. The residue of her possessions, she had distributed, by will, in various bequests, which constituted the ostensive part of her fortune.

She did not survive a whole two days after her parting from the king, and expired at Versailles, the fifteenth

of April, 1764, in the forty-second year of her age, and about the twentieth year of her reign.

When the news of her death came to Paris, it is incredible how little sensation it excited there, where, some time before, every thing relating to her used to make so great a noise. In less than three days time, she was as completely forgot, and as little talked or thought of, as if she had never existed. But, in this, her memory had no worse treatment, than that of Lewis XIV. who was no sooner in his grave, than buried in oblivion by the good people of his capital.

But if, in this point, she resembled that particular prince, she, in another, had a conformity with the generality of princes, in its being given out that

she had met with a fate, so commonly, and almost always so falsely, assigned for them, that of being poisoned. If she really, before she died, as it was reported she did, expressed a desire that her body might not be opened, it is infinitely more probable that this sprung from the natural aversion that many have for their bodies, after death, undergoing this operation, than to any suspicion she herself had of having been poisoned, and to her unwillingness that the verification of it should be traced home to the only persons who could be suspected of it, and who were at once under great obligations to her, and connected with her.

As to the king himself, her death was, no doubt, a sort of relief to him. She had maintained, to the last, an

ascendant, in some degree, over him ; though, latterly, rather a forced, than a voluntary, one ; rather the effect of the power of habit, and of his own good-nature, than of her charms, either of body or mind. Abstracting from the memory of long past tenderness and endearments, a natural impatience of any constraint, and more so in those of his rank than in any other, must make him bear, with the less affliction, an event, which, as to her at least, restored him to fuller freedom. The regard, the deference, he never discontinued paying her, though, apparently, nothing but the acts of his own royal will and pleasure, were, at bottom, a burthen, a tax, which his natural goodness had laid on his inclination. He might, then, consequently enough,

be supposed to have much such feelings of her death, as a young pupil would have, on that of a tutor leaving him his heir, and setting him at liberty.

The courtiers, who watched his behaviour on this occasion, reported, that the first day, on the news of her death, there appeared on his countenance some marks of sorrow; the second, they were changed into indifference, and, on the third, that he was remarkably chearful, and seemed to have as completely forgot her as the Parisians themselves. It is even added, that, on the day when the funeral-hearse and procession went from Versailles, he was standing at a window, as they were going by, and observing a small drizzling rain, he turned to some of his

attendants, saying with a smile, *Madame la marquise sera mouillée*, "the marchioness will be wet". And presently afterwards, without any more symptom of concern, went out a hunting, as usual. But it is very probable, that, though he might give himself this air of disengagement, he would not, without displeasure, hear her memory disrespectfully treated by others; by which, if nothing else, the royal prerogative of never being to be reminded of a fault, would sensibly suffer.

Thus ended la Pompadour, the good and bad of whose qualities will, in the course of her conduct precedently related, as near the truth as a thorough impartiality in the research could come at it, appear clearly enough not to need a recapitulation; and they are, accordingly, left to the

reader's own reflection, which will supply him with a juster idea of them, than one of those modern fancy-portraits of characters, of late so much in fashion, and which are commonly made up of nothing but affected antitheses, and epigrammatic points.

As to her person, at the time when, in its full powers of beauty, she made a conquest of the king, in or about the year 1744, the charms of it, indisputably, did not discredit his taste. Her complexion was naturally very fair, with eyes full of meaning, of which the great life they gave to her face, was not unpleasingly tempered with a certain air of languor and tenderness, that it received from a constitution rather inclined to sickness. Of this the palish hue of her lips was another sign, and such an one as could

not give the imagination very favourable prepossessions. Neither did she, towards heightening her colour, or rather towards supplying the deficiency of it, disdain the aid of a slight tinge of artificial red, though no more than amounted to just a suspicion. Her features were all perfectly delicate, her hair of the chestnut color, her stature of a middling size, and her shape irreproachable. Nothing, in fact, could more beautifully taper into slenderness of waist. Conscious of this, and never negligent of any art that could improve any advantage she had, she invented, for an undress, a gown, that came into fashion under the name of robe-à-la-Pompadour, made somewhat in the stile of a Sultana, buttoning at the collar and wrists, which, well-

adapted to the rise of the bosom, and gathering close round the waist, marks the shape with the more grace and effect, for its appearance, at the first glance, of an entire undesignedness to show it.

There was great sprightliness and vivacity diffused throughout her person, and animated her every look and gesture, perhaps in too great a degree, since it might contribute to her being remarkable for a bold, forward air, and a way of presenting herself, that ever seemed as much as to say pertly, "Here am I. " Upon the whole, however, she was generally allowed one of the handsomest, and most agreeable women, at that time, in Paris.

But these attractions, like faded blossoms, soon passed away, and left

her to depend solely on the more solid foundations she had laid for the king's affections in rendering herself necessary to his amusement, when she could no longer, with her person, contribute to his pleasure. Her taste, too, in dress, supplied, in some measure, the decline of her charms, or helped to conceal it. The favour of the king, doubtless, in a court so much enslaved to it, contributed not a little to give her the empire of fashion, which she led for a long time. Many decorations of the toilette, many articles of dress, were called by her name, which however, is, in Paris, no very great distinction, being so often the sport of whim, and of novelty. Her ideas on dress were quoted, in general, as the standard of elegance, except where she gave a

little too much into a theatrical cast of it. Of this those frightful high head-dresses which were called *tetes-a-la-Pompadour*, were one instance. They might have done tolerably well towards dressing the character of a Roman empress, being probably taken from some of their medals.

But with her incontestable influence at one time, over the modes of the court, she was inexcusable for suffering herself to be drawn into that execrable fashion of painting, or daubing, the face, with a great splotch of red, which the ladies of the greatest rank there affect, by way of distinction. A practice which, equally concealing a good or a bad complexion (for they almost all use it) breeds such a tame, ridiculous sameness, that there is hard-

ly any more distinguishing one face from another, than in a flock of sheep; at the same time that this horrid caricature of red, or vermillion, is so glaringly predominant, that they might be taken for so many figure-dancers, masked, for executing a dance of furies. One would imagine, that, not satisfied with being chaste in themselves, they sought to be the cause of chastity in others, from that, otherwise, unaccountable rage they have of daubing themselves in so coarse and unnatural a way, as to destroy all effect of their features, and every desire in the men, but that of having nothing to say to them. No wonder that grisettes are so often preferred to figures so much fitter to turn the stomach than to win the heart. This, by the bye, is one of the many

instances that, in the luxury of civilised nations, there is often as palpable a barbarism, as in the poverty of savage ones: a barbarism not only more disgusting, in its deviating more from nature, but more shocking, for its existing amidst so many pretensions to superior knowledge and greater elegance of taste. The American savage, surely, paints his face to frighten his enemies with more propriety than the French woman of quality does hers in a way that can only frighten her friends. On *la Pompadour*, however, with whose system of a sickly habit of body and collapsed muscles, such a violent flaming red must be in terribly false concord, it could hardly miss giving the idea of a painted sepulchre. May she rest in her real one!

May none of her errors be remembered but with the tender compassion due to human infirmity, nor mentioned but as conveying a lesson much wanted by mankind, to humble their vanity, by shewing to them, in the example of this woman, the nothingness of their fate in this world ; since the greatest affairs, the most important interests of nations and empires, have been so often seen to depend on such trifles as a Pompadour !

THE END.

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